THE TECHIMAN-BONO OF GHANA

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN AKAN SOCIETY

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THE TECHIMAN-BONO OF GHANA

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN AKAN SOCIETY

Dennis M. Warren
Iowa State University

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Dedicated to

Nana Kwakye Ameyaw II,
Paramount Chief of
Techiman-Bono Traditional State
and the
Techiman Traditional Council

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Preface

Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast until it became the first black African colony to gain its independence in 1957, is about the size of Oregon and has a population of nearly nine million people. Ghana is rich in gold, diamonds, and bauxite, is the world's leading producer of cocoa, and is noted for its exceptionally friendly and hospitable people. The country is divided into nine regions, but the central government recognizes 108 traditional states as well. This ethnography is about one of these states, that of the Techiman-Bono, located in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Central Ghana. Many of the traditional states in Southern Ghana are homogeneous linguistically and culturally and together they are known as the Akan. The Techiman-Bono state is important since it was the earliest centralized state among the Akan and its existence dates back at least several centuries. Today the Techiman area is one of Ghana's primary producers of cocoa and foodstuffs and Techiman is the site for one of the largest markets in the country.

The author first lived in Techiman 1964-1966 while teaching science at the Secondary School. Field research for a doctoral dissertation in anthropology was conducted 1969-1971, and shorter visits were made in the summers of 1973 and 1974. The Techiman traditional culture, despite rapid changes and Westernization, is resilient as well as rich. The hospitality of its people is almost overwhelming for the visitor from the West, who frequently finds many of the traditional values new and fulfilling.

This ethnography is intended as an elementary introduction to certain aspects of Techiman culture; it should be of use to those who intend to travel or work in Ghana, and hopefully it will be of equal use to students interested in Africa and anthropology.

A note should be made regarding some of the Bono-Twi words (Twi is a major dialect of the Akan language). Some terms such as Bono and Asante also have Anglicized forms such as Brong and Ashanti. Some of the Twi letter combinations may appear unusual to

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the English speaker; *ky* is pronounced ch (as in church), *dy* and *gy* are pronounced as the j-sound in jump, *hy* is rendered as sh in the word shout, and the word Twi is pronounced as if one were combining the ch-sound of church with the pronoun we. A common suffix used frequently is *-hene* meaning chief; Techimanhene thus means the paramount chief of Techiman. The term *ɔmanhene* means chief of the state (*ɔman*, state).

The author would like to thank the many people in Techiman who made this research such an enjoyable and enlightening task, especially Mrs. Mary Warren, Mr. Owusu Brempong and Mr. Yusuf Ameyaw for their insights into the depths of the local culture. Finally, appreciation is expressed to the editorial staff of *African Arts* for permission to reprint certain portions of two forthcoming articles by the author ("Bono Royal Regalia," vol. 8, no. 2; "Bono Shrine Art", vol. 8, no. 4).

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Part I

Historical and Geographical Background

This description of the Techiman-Bono identifies the population in spatial, temporal, and sociocultural terms. Since no comprehensive study of the Bono exists, this description will also fill one of the ethnographic gaps for the Akan, even though the Techiman-Bono ethnographic data correspond reasonably well with those already available for other Akan societies.

Although the Akan culture cluster includes more than a dozen societies (Murdock 1959:253-254) only the Asante-Akyem, Fante, and Akuapem have been adequately represented in the ethnographic literature. Linguistic descriptions have been limited to the dialects of these same three societies and, hence, they are the only Akan dialects in which extensive vernacular literatures exist. Although comprehensive research on the other Akan societies has not been conducted, information of a fragmented nature can be found on them. All of the societies presently classified as Akan are politically autonomous. It is believed that they all speak mutually-intelligible dialects of the Akan language and have cultural institutions strongly influenced by a matrilineal descent system, polygyny, and a preference for cross-cousin marriage. The lack of data, however, makes it difficult at this time to formulate any more detailed statement on the sociocultural and linguistic characteristics of the Akan cluster as a whole.

Geographically the Akan occupy that portion of southern Ghana and southeastern Ivory Coast bounded by the Volta River in the east and the Komoe (Comoe) River in the west. The Guinea Coast and the Black Volta River form the southern and northern boundaries (see maps I and II). In Ghana, five of the nation's nine regions, Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Western, Central and Eastern, are predominantly Akan (see Map III).

The most populous societies among the Akan, according to the 1960 national census, are the Asante (895,000; 13.3% of the total population of Ghana), Fante (785,000; 11.3%), Bono (320,000; 4.8%), Akyem (204,000; 3.0%), Akuapem (145,000; 2.2%), and

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Kwahu (132,000; 2.0%). Smaller Akan societies include the Akwamu, Asen, Denkyira, Twifo, and Wassa (see Map IV).

The Bono are an Akan society composed of a number of traditional states; this study is limited to one, that of the Techiman-Bono. Historians agree that the Techiman-Bono (originally called the Bono-Manso) Kingdom was the first centralized (and the northernmost) Akan state (see, e.g., Arhin:70; Boahen 1965:161; Boahen 1966). The founding date for the Kingdom is unclear. Meyerowitz dated its founding to 1295; Boahen (1966) and Wilks (1972:357) both set the date to sometime within the first half of the fifteenth century. Meyerowitz has spent considerable effort attempting to link the Bono to ancient civilizations centered at Timbuktu, Carthage, and Ancient Egypt. Oral data which I collected on Bono origins is more provincial, stating that the Bono are autochthonous, and were led from a subterranean cavern called Amowi (near the town of Pinihi, within the Nkoranza-Bono Traditional State) by the first Bono-Manso king, Asaman.

Since national independence in 1957, most Bono have regarded themselves as Ghanaians, though they refer to themselves ethnically as Akan. Their strongest allegiance, however, is to the Bono society, and particularly to the Bono state to which the individual belongs. Members of the Techiman-Bono state exhibit a fierce pride in their past and often remark that they are the descendants of the earliest Akan state. This pride was evident in 1951 when a number of Bono states joined Techiman in seceding from the Asante Confederation and established the Brong-Kyempim Federation. By 1958 all of the Bono states, followed by those of the Ahafo, had entered the federation and the area was renamed Brong-Ahafo. This federation was the fore-runner of the Brong-Ahafo House of Chiefs which was established, along with the Brong-Ahafo Region, in 1960 by the Ghanaian government (see Map V).

The two most populous societies in the Brong-Ahafo Region, the Bono and Ahafo, are Akan. In 1960 the region was divided into four districts, South, Central, North, and East, the capital, Sunyani, being administered separately. The Bono inhabit the Central, Northern, and Eastern districts whereas the Southern district is almost exclusively inhabited by Ahafo. A number of small-scale non-Akan societies, the Banda, Mo, Ntwumuru, Badu, Ligby, and Gyaman, also live in the region. The Banda and Mo are found in the northwestern corner of the Northern district, whereas the Ntwumuru, an aboriginal Guan society, live in the Eastern district of Brong-Ahafo. The Banda,

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Ligby and Gyaman live in the Northern and Central districts and extend across the Ghanaian border into the Ivory Coast. Scholarly ethnographic literature on any of these non-Akan societies is minimal or nonexistent.

The following historical and sociocultural data on the Techiman-Bono were collected 1969-1971. According to Techiman oral history no other Akan kingdom existed at the time that the first Bono-Manso king, Asaman, brought his people from the cavern. Later the Denkyira nation emerged and established friendly relations with the Bono Kingdom. The road linking the two nations passed through the present town of Techimentia. At that time there was no Asante nation, and the Kumasi-area chiefdoms were subservient to the Denkyirahene.

Like other peoples, the Techiman-Bono are ethnocentric. Techiman talking drums beat in Bono-Twi, "When God created things, He created the Bono before anything else" and, "God created the people here before He created others." "*Bono*" is explained to mean "the first ones to be created" (*bo*, to create; *no*, the). Being "first-born" is said to mean that the Bono were the first people to occupy the area. Historically the Bono claim—and this is substantiated by oral histories from other Akan states—to have originated the Akan crafts of goldsmithing and *kente* cloth weaving; also they claim to have begun the system of goldweights (see Ward 1950:51-52; Arhin:70). The ancestors of the inhabitants of Bonwire, the *kente*-weaving capital of Asante, are supposed to have come from Techiman. According to oral history, after the Bono defeat in 1723, the Asante took many of the Bono craftsmen to Kumasi where they remained and taught their arts and crafts.

The Manso-Techiman area lies in a strategic economic location. Ecologically it is a transition zone between the forest and the savannah, the area where much of the Mande trade between the Sudanic nations and the Guinea Coast states took place. Boahen (1966) has described Techiman as being one of the end points for the Djenne trade route; also important is the fact that Techiman was the major town between Kumasi (a seven-days walk away) and Begho, the Mande-Dyula trading town which was another terminus of the Djenne—Bobo-Dioulasso—Kong—Bondoukou (Bonduku) trading route (Wilks 1961:15; 1962:339).

Although the founding date for the Techiman-Bono has not yet been established, later dates have been accurately determined and they make it possible to place the Bono in at least a limited time

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perspective. The second Asantehene, Opoku Ware, was able to defeat and destroy the Bono-Manso nation in 1722-1723 during the reign of King Ameyaw. After this conflict Techiman became the new capital. A second war between the Techiman-Bono and the Asante nation occurred c. 1877; Techiman was again defeated and moved into a twenty year self-imposed period of exile in the Bondoukou-Gyaman state in the Ivory Coast. The Techiman people returned to rebuild their capital and state in 1896 after the British defeated the Asante nation.

Among the Bono states which exist today, only the Techiman-Bono and Wenchi-Bono states, located in the Northern district of Brong-Ahafo, claim to be autochthonous (see maps V and VI). The Nkoranza-Bono state rulers are Adansi refugees from the Amakom area of Asante, although the populace includes many who trace their ancestry to Bono-Manso. The Dua-Yaw Nkwanta-Bono rulers claim to have descended from the sky; the founders of the Bechem, Dormaa and Berekum-Bono states all came as immigrants from the Akwamu and other southern Akan states. Immediately to the west of the Ghanaian Bono is the Gyaman (also called the Abron) Kingdom with its administrative capital at Bondoukou, Ivory Coast. The principal Abron town in Ghana is Sampa (see Map V). Close relations have always existed between the Bono and the Abron.

Although the descendants of Bono states which were formed by Akan who came to the area as refugees during times of conflict still maintain loose ties with their original societies, they all consider themselves as Bono. Rattray, Meyerowitz, Busia, and Lystad have confused the identities of the Bono by referring to them generally as Akan or as Asante—whereas they were only under Asante suzerainty. None of the Brong-Ahafo societies considers itself to be Asante. In fact, being a Bono in eastern Brong-Ahafo is primarily a claim to being non-Asante, coupled with a repudiation of allegiance to the Asante.

Linguistically the various Bono societies speak a number of distinct Bono-Twi subdialects of Akan. The Nkoranza Bono-Twi is considered to be the closest to the Asante-Twi dialect of Akan, while the Dormaa-Berekum Bono-Twi, and the Techiman-Wenchi Bono-Twi seem to deviate considerably from Asante-Twi. Although nothing of substance has been published on the linguistic structure of these subdialects, Dr. Florence Dolphyne of the University of Ghana is now analyzing them.

For more than a century all of Brong-Ahafo was under Asante control. An interest in the Ahafo area centered upon the establish-

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ment of a buffer zone against the Aowin and Sehwi to the Southwest and the control of the Ahafo kola-producing areas, kola nuts being a major trade item with the Sudanic nations. In the Eastern Bono area their interest was upon control of the main route to the Salaga slave market; the interest in the Western Bono area seems to have been related to the gold fields in the area, which were originally controlled by Bono-Manso.

Just as some of the Bono states were established by refugees of other Akan societies, certain clans and lineages among the Techiman-Bono came as immigrant groups and were successfully absorbed into the local social and political systems. The usual mechanism for integration was through a marriage alliance between the Techimanhene (the paramount chief of the Techiman State) and the queenmother of the refugee group. Their son would be established as the head of the refugee lineage and would represent it on the Techiman paramount council.

The Techiman *Nifahene*, the right-flank war chief, is head of the *Aduana* clan, which migrated from the Akwamu area to Techiman-Manso more than two centuries ago. The Techiman *Ahyiayemhene*, chief in charge of the Bono border with the Asante, traces his ancestry back to the Denkyira society. The *Mponoahene*, chief in charge of the northern border, came from Prabomboase, a town in the non-Akan area northwest of the Techiman state.

More recently members of many other societies have been incorporated into the Techiman Zongo (Wangara and Hausa wards), the strangers' section of the capital town, established formally at the beginning of the twentieth century by Techimanhene Yaw Kramo (see Map VII). Today there are Zongo chiefs in charge of various non-Bono settler groups including the Sisala, Banda, Dagomba, Dagarti (Dagaba) and Gonja from northern Ghana (see Map IV), the Hausa and Yoruba from Nigeria, the Mossi from Upper Volta, the Wangara from Mali, and the Zabrama (Zaberma) from Niger.

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The Paramount chief of the Techiman-Bono Traditional State, Nana Kwakye Ameyaw II.
Note the handwoven *Kente* cloth and gold jewelry.

The Queenmother, Nana Afua Abrafi, is the ultimate power in this matrilineal society.

The *Krontihene*, Nana Yiadom Boakye, represents the paramount chief should he be absent.

The *Nifahene*, Nana Kwame Ampomah; note the hand-stamped *Adinkra* clothes, each design being symbolic. The *Nifahene* in earlier times was the right-flank war chief.

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Map I. Nations of Africa.

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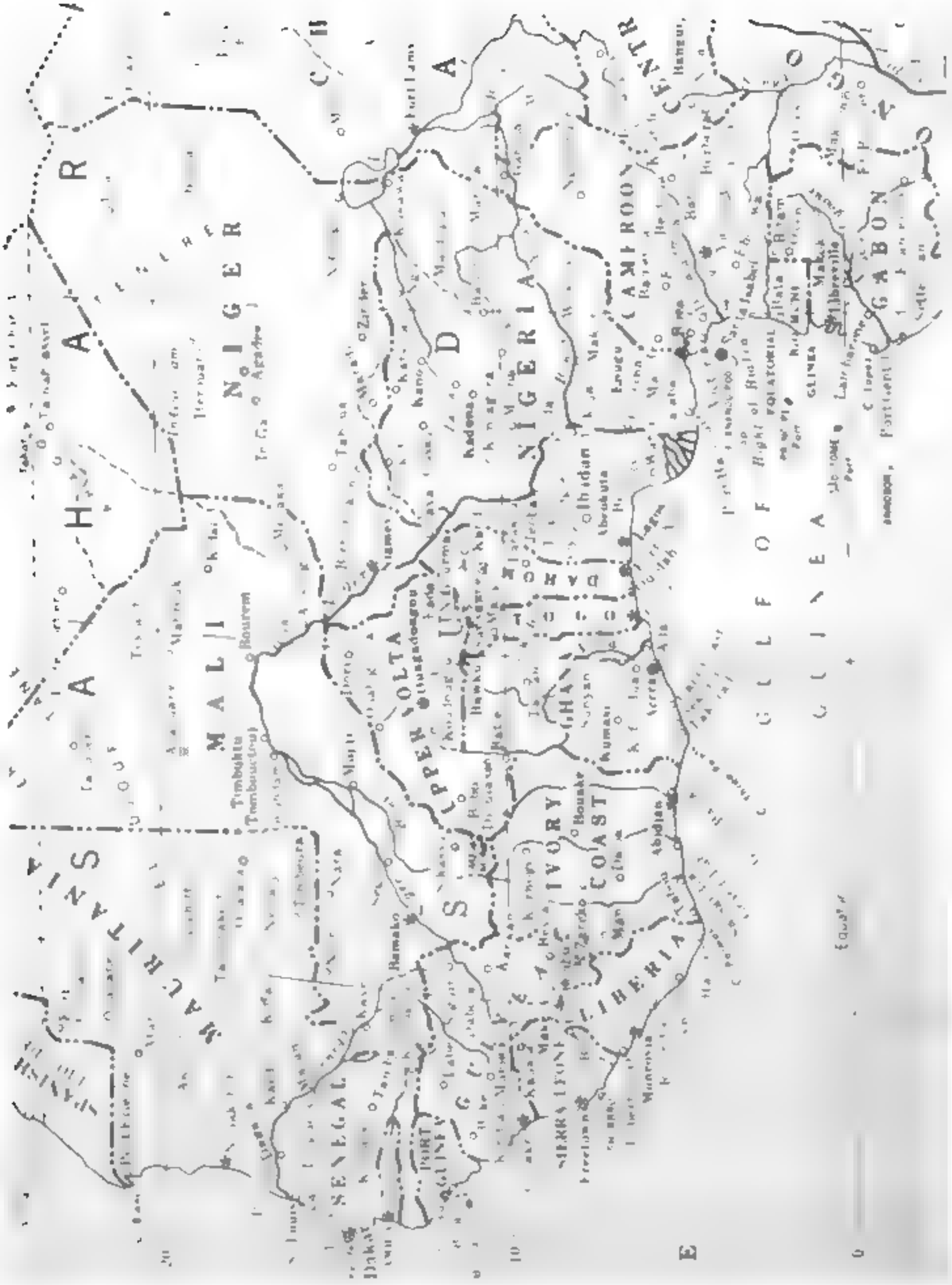
Map II. West Africa.



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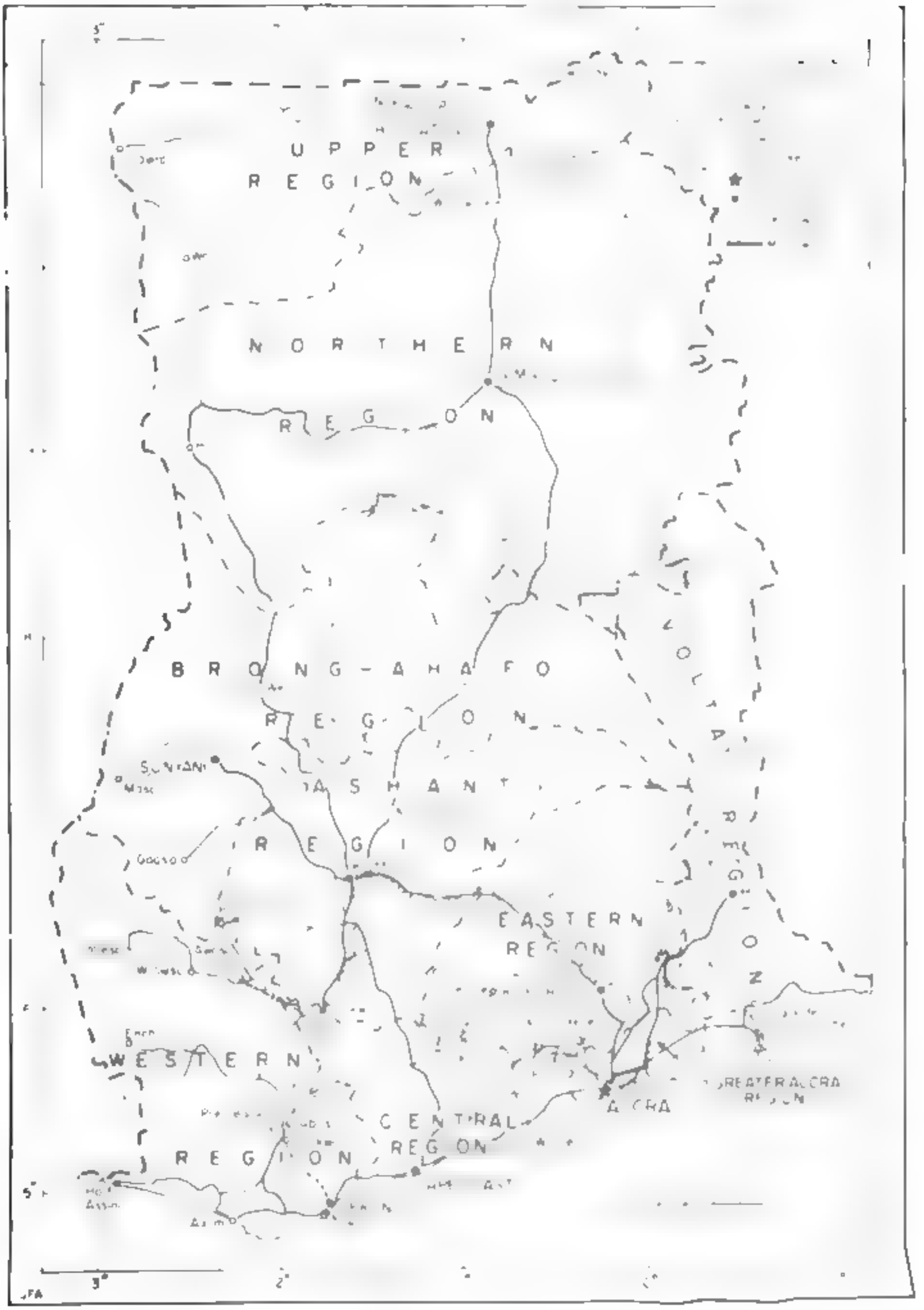
Map III. The Regions of Ghana.



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Map IV. Ethnic Groups of Ghana (emphasizing the Akan Area).

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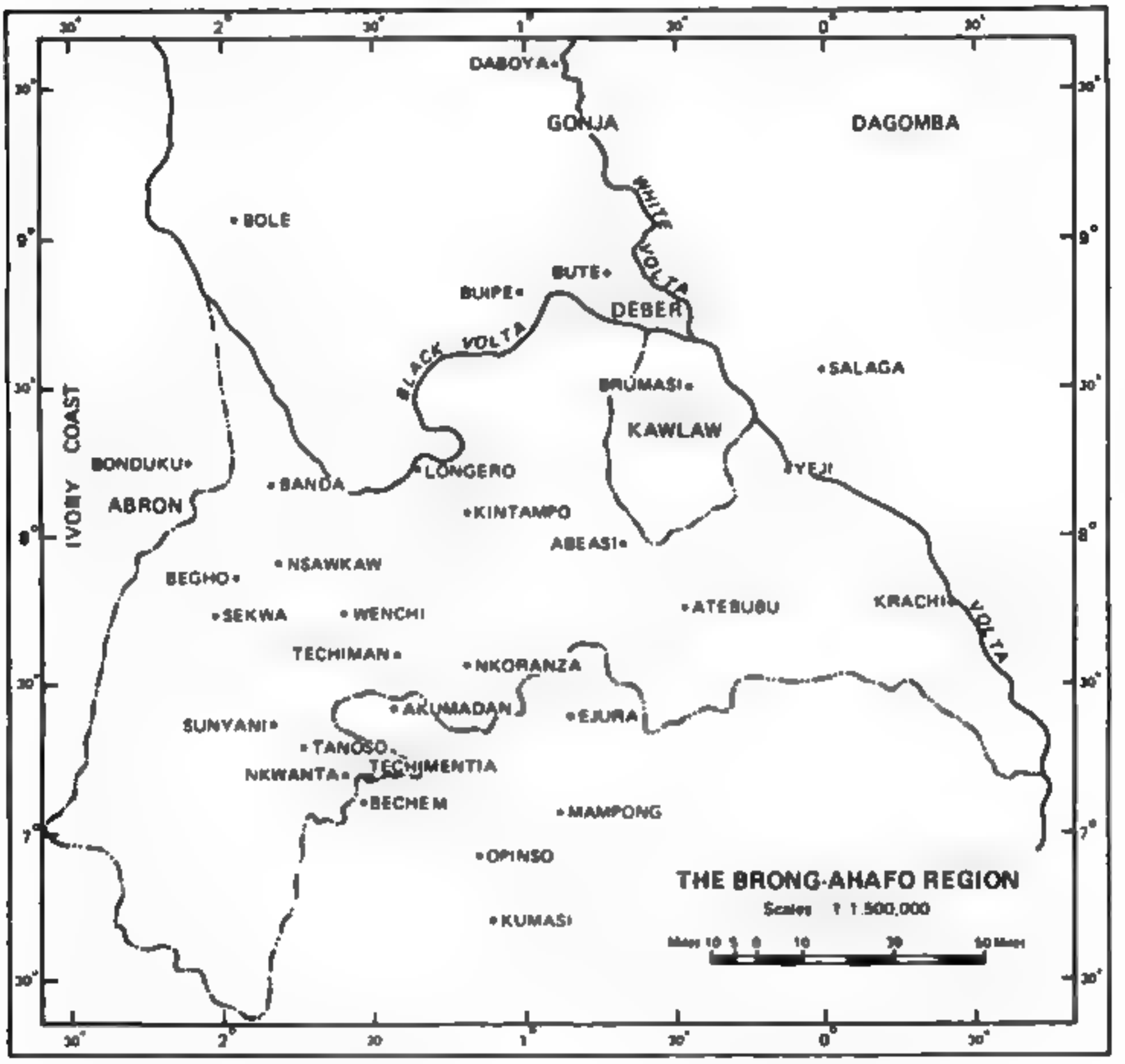
Map V. The Brong-Ahafo Region.



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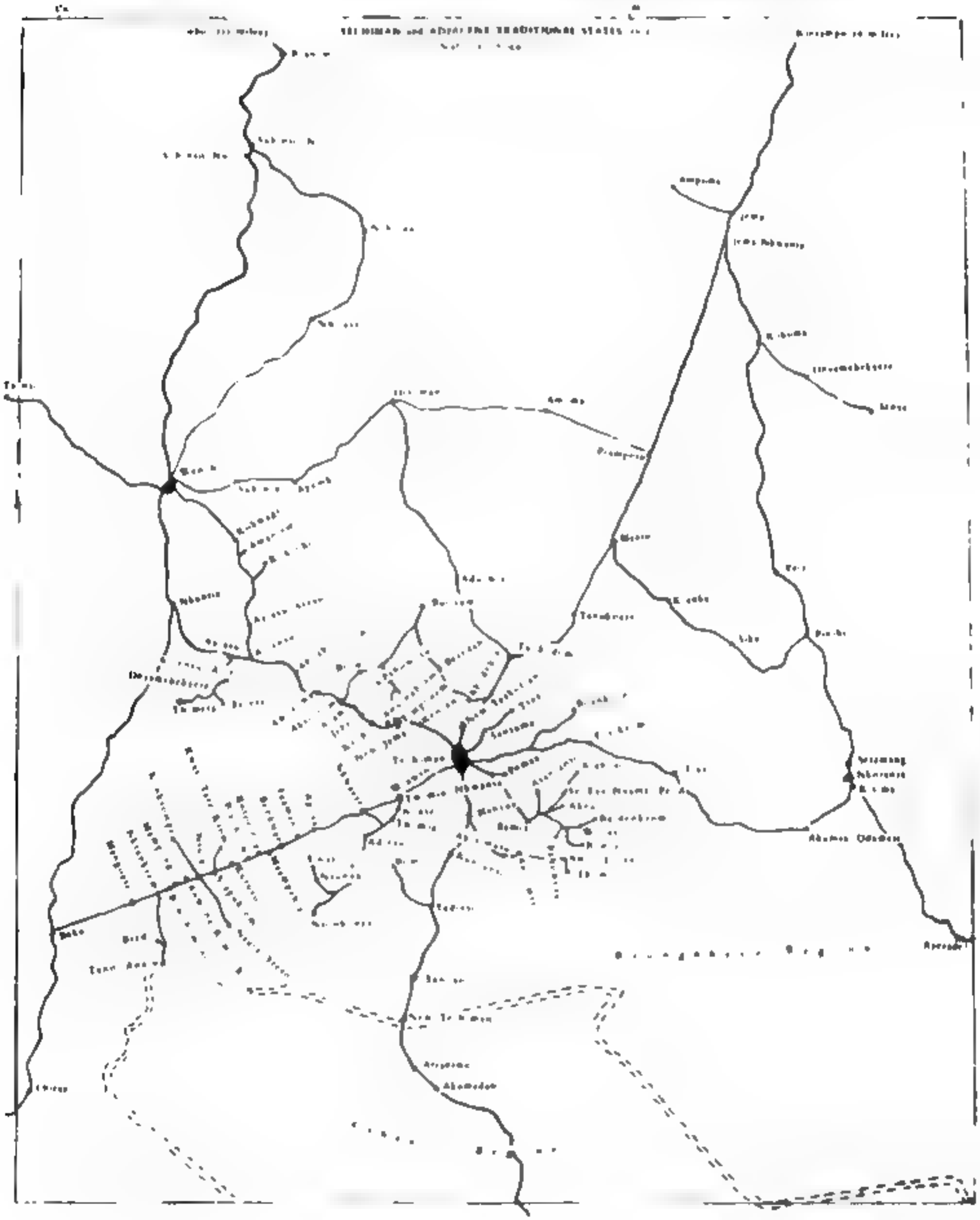
Map VI. Techiman-Bono and Adjacent Bono Traditional States.



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Map VII. Techiman Township, 1971.

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Part II

Social Customs and Social Structure

A. General Ecological Features

The average annual rainfall in the Techiman area is 55-60", and occurs almost exclusively between the months of March and September. The types of soils vary from rich humus to badly-leached laterites, but the predominant soil group in the state is the savannah ochrosols. The vegetation is mainly semi-deciduous forest which changes quite dramatically to guinea savannah-woodland in the northern part of the state. There are no extensive mineral deposits in the state although isolated diamonds can be found in the Offuman-Branam area and gold fields, more important in the past, lie to the west and north of Branam.

Agricultural products include both forest and savannah crops. Cash crops include cocoa, tobacco (introduced a decade ago), kola nuts, and timber; in the past rubber was important but it is no longer actively cultivated. Coffee was successfully introduced a decade ago and there is now a state-operated coffee mill in Techiman. Cotton was introduced in 1971, but poor yields (due primarily to a year of semi-drought) discouraged farmers from replanting it. Citrus fruits grow well, although the Bono do not eat grapefruit, and lemon and lime are used only occasionally in medicines. Avocado (called pear, *paya*) are grown, as are pawpaw (papaya), coconut, mango, pineapple, sugarcane, a fruit called sweet apple, and breadfruit. The principal food crops include many varieties of plantain, banana, cocoyam (taro), cassava (manioc), yam, maize, groundnuts (peanuts), garden eggs (a species of eggplant), okro, pepper, and tomatoes; sweet potatoes, beans, bambara nuts, *akyii* (a type of red bean), and the sponge (used for bathing) are also grown. Onions must be imported from Keta on the coast. Ornamental flowers, shrubs, and trees are not highly regarded and are not actively cultivated.

The animals most commonly raised are goats, sheep and chickens. Cows are brought from the North and survive without difficulty

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now that the tsetse fly has been eradicated. Horses are rare in the area, and pigs are kept only by an occasional farmer. Ducks, pigeons, turkeys, guinea fowls, and guinea pigs are quite common. The larger wild animals are now quite scarce, but a considerable number of various types of antelope and rodents are still killed by hunters using a variety of rifles—many handmade. The cane rat or grasscutter, a rodent the size of a large woodchuck, as well as squirrels, bushrats, forest snails, and large bats are also caught and eaten. Dogs are common and used in hunting. Cats are not kept as pets, but occasionally one is seen.

Division of labor by sex is not adhered to strictly. Virtually every adult Bono has a farm or a garden; the main tools used are shorthandled hoes and cutlasses. Heavy work such as clearing overgrown land, making yam mounds, or tending cocoa farms is done primarily by the men. Often Northerners are hired to do this type of work; many of them live in the farming villages and are given room, board, clothes, and an annual wage. Hunting is done by men, as is the trapping of both game and fish. Petty trade, on the other hand, is predominantly controlled by women, as is housework, although men do help with cooking, ironing, and other such tasks if necessary.

The traditional Bono house is a square or rectangular structure made from clay bricks and roofed with thatch; most of the daily activity takes place in the central open compound. Many houses are not finished at one time; a room is added annually after every cocoa season when money is plentiful until the entire house is completed. If finances warrant, aluminum or iron sheeting is used for the roof and the clay bricks are covered with an outer plaster of cement. Wealthy Bono now use cement building blocks. In Techiman Township there have been thirteen two-story houses built in the last ten years; of these, five still have the open central compound.

The first motor roads linking Techiman to Kumasi, Sunyani and Wenchi were built during the 1920's; the road between Nkoranza and Techiman was completed later (see Map VI). Techiman stands in stark contrast to many Northern Ghanaian areas where there is a very high population density but very few compact population centers. Subsistence agriculture without cash crops to the north of Techiman makes a central market system less necessary in those areas. In Techiman Traditional State many inhabitants of the smaller villages have built houses in Techiman; the farmer spends part of his time in the village and brings his cash and food crops to Techiman to sell in the Friday market. He thus has quarters in both places, and, should he

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become wealthy enough, will add another house in Kumasi or Accra—as a number of Techiman people have already done.

B. Daily Activities

Although daily routine varies somewhat from the rainy to the dry season, the following may be considered a general description. Every morning the Bono arise by six when it is already light and immediately go to ease themselves. Persons on the way to the toilet never initiate greetings (although those returning may initiate them); the toilet may be a flush toilet, a bucket or pit latrine used exclusively by the members of the compound house, or a public latrine, several of which are located strategically around the town. It is considered impolite to remark directly that someone has gone to defecate; it is more polite to say "he is taking the road." Failure to defecate at least twice a day is considered a symptom of possible illness, and the person may prepare and administer an enema. After returning from the toilet, the person bathes, usually with a bucket of heated water, soap, and a sponge made from a fibrous plant (*sapow*) or from the fibers of the palm tree. A woman will not begin to cook breakfast for her husband and family until after she has had her bath. After bathing the person eats breakfast, which often consists of corn-porridge or boiled yams, plantain, cocoyam, or cassava with some stew. The work schedule then begins and if it includes work on the farm, it is unlikely that the person will return home until evening, lunch being prepared on the farm. The evening meal usually consists of *fufu* (mashed boiled yams, plantain, cassava, cocoyam, or cassava mixed with any combination of the others), with palmnut, groundnut, or "green" (made with cocoyam—taro—leaves) stew or "light-soup" (made with red pepper and broth). The Bono do not eat desserts and, in general, eat few sugary foods, which may account for their low incidence of tooth decay. Uncooked vegetables are not eaten; most are boiled and then ground into a paste which is added to the stew or soup. Every Bono takes an evening bath before retiring, even in the cold evenings of the harmattan (the dry season). Cleanliness also extends to the shaving of axillary and pubic hair.

Many Bono smoke cigarettes; the elderly men and a few elderly females also indulge in pipes. Indian hemp (called *wii*, "weed") is not commonly used although some of the younger generation are learning to use it, often from the Hausa youths in the Zongo who tend to be more familiar with it. Its use is considered by the Bono to result in madness and as such it is generally disapproved and avoided.

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Greetings are very important for the Bono; respect for age demands that greetings be initiated by the younger of two persons. It is considered impolite to call someone who is senior in age by a first name, even a day-name. The terms *Agya* (father), *Nana* (grandfather, grandmother, elder, chief), "Auntie," *Owura* (Sir or Mr.), and *Awuraa*, (Miss) are used instead of names. One can greet at a distance by raising one's right forearm with an open palm towards the receiver. It is highly discourteous to greet anyone with the left hand, to wave with it, to take or receive anything from someone with it, and, especially, to eat with it. The left hand is kept exclusively for toilet purposes and sex. The only abusive gesture is to point the fist at someone and move the thumb up and down; this makes references to the receiver's mother's sexual organs. Outsiders coming to live in the Bono area are expected to greet the chief and other authorities formally and to relate their reason for coming to the town.

The Bono rely heavily upon a system of respect between the younger and the older. Elders are still greatly respected, even by the younger generation attending school. Old family members live in the family house and take care of grandchildren and do other housekeeping and minor farming jobs. Privacy is also respected. One always announces one's arrival at someone's house by shouting *Agoo*, and one would never enter a room unless given permission (*Amee*); one may also say *kɔkɔɔkɔ* (the sound of knocking) and gain permission (*Bra*, come). In a crowded market or lorry park one can also shout *Agoo* to get through the crowd. If one steps on or bumps into someone else, one excuses oneself by saying *kafera* or *kose*; one can also say "Sorry" (meaning "Excuse me" in American English). If one wants to apologize for something or is asking forgiveness for a transgression he may slap the back of his right hand into the palm of the left hand and say *Mesrɛ wo* or *Mepa wo kyɛw* (I ask you to forgive me). If one wants to mention a topic considered taboo or unclean, he first says *Sebe* (excuse). If one has offended someone else it is considered proper to ask a mutual friend to go to the offended party to seek forgiveness for the transgressor.

Swear words common in the West which refer to sexual intercourse and feces, as well as the use of God's name, are not common. If someone is greatly pained, either physically or emotionally, he may shout *Agya ei*! (Father!); *Maame ei*! (Mother!); or *Ewuradi* (or *Ewuradi Nyɛ ɪkopon*), God, but not in a sacrilegious sense. The two most common epithets are "fool" (*kwasea*) and "animal" (*aboa*), but many abusive phrases may be used in a highly poetic manner by sufficiently enraged Bono.

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Body scarification and tatooing are not practiced by the Bono, although in some cases a person may have his name and birthplace tatooed on a forearm. The traditional mark on the cheekbone, cut to prevent convulsions (ɛ*soro*), is a distinguishing Bono mark which is common to other Akan. Today non-Akan living in Techiman often have their children "vaccinated" in the same way making them physically indistinguishable from the Bono. Most babies wear beads beneath their knees and around their waists; after a year only the baby girls continue to wear waist beads, which are worn by Bono females of all ages. All baby girls have their ears pierced at birth.

Violence, with the exception of an occasional spanking of a child or a mild marital quarrel, is very uncommon. Street brawls are infrequent and there is no serious juvenile delinquency problem. The lack of delinquency may be related to the fact that most children have many responsibilities, including helping in the gardens and farms and around the house, as well as selling. Children play many games as well; these are especially evident on nights with a full moon when social games are played late into the night. Rape is unheard of, murder is extraordinarily rare, and suicide is very uncommon. Although stomach ulcers and serious mental problems seem infrequent among the Bono, competitiveness and jealousy can occur within the extended family.

Alcoholism is not a common problem among the Bono, even though a great deal of alcohol is consumed. The most popular traditional drinks are palmwine (*nsafufuo*), guinea corn beer (*pito*), and locally-distilled gin (*akpeteshie*). Palmwine is of several varieties, the most popular being that of the oil palm. The Bono cut down the entire mature tree and cut a square hole in the heart of the tree where the new shoots emerge; a reed is stuck through a smaller hole so the sap of the tree drips into a black pot; after a tree has been cut down, at least two full pots will be collected each day for the thirty days before the tree becomes dry. The fan palm tree is climbed and tapped at the top, where a gourd is hung; this palmwine tastes distinctively different from that of the oil palm and is called *yabra*. *Doka* is another type of palmwine, tapped from a felled Raphia palm tree. *Akpeteshie* is alcohol distilled from palmwine; it can also be made from mangos or sugar cane, but many brewers now use only sugar and yeast. The government has legalized and controls the brewing of these alcohols. The traditional drink of northern Ghana, *pito*, is becoming increasingly popular among the Bono. It is made from guinea maize, a grain grown in the savannah. The dry guinea maize is kept in water for a day and is then spread on a cool floor away from

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the sun until it sprouts. Having sprouted, it is spread in the sun to dry and then boiled for two days; yeast is added while it is being boiled on the third day and on the fourth day it can be drunk.

Many of the popular pito and palmwine bars are in the large Techiman market or along its periphery, where they do a thriving business on Thursdays and Fridays. The ancient Bono market, called Dwabrem, was located on the grounds of Techiman Secondary School. Today the Techiman market is one of the largest weekly markets in Ghana, with lorries and sellers traversing the length and breadth of Ghana and travelling from adjacent countries for the Friday market. A majority of the sellers are women; the Techiman market women are organized into unions according to the produce they sell. A union, headed by an elected queenmother and her spokesmen, holds regular meetings. The unions function at both an economic level where they help control and stabilize prices and maintain harmony among the members, and at a social level where they provide moral and financial aid to members who are involved in a funeral or other costly affairs.

C. Family and Social Structure

The extended family system is still very important among the Bono and is the source of both a great deal of collective strength and individual conflict. One popular *kente* cloth pattern is called "*Abusua yɛ dɔm*," meaning one may have enemies within one's own matrilineage or bloodline. The Bono are matrilineal; a person thus inherits and succeeds not the father but the mother's brother (see Chart I).

The patrilineal component of a person is one's *sunsum* or spirit; this is also considered to be very important and it is said that a person's father's *sunsum* can protect one if the father has been given respect. It is considered unwise for a person to meet with a joint group of matrilineal and patrilineal relatives since the matrilineal relatives may overpower the *sunsum* of a person's father. If this happens the person can die at once since illness caused by witchcraft can attack the person. Illnesses attributed to this phenomenon of *bayi* (commonly translated "witchcraft") are almost exclusively derived from one's matrilineage.

Matrilineal family ties are extraordinarily strong and resilient; sections of an *abusua* (matrilineage) which migrated from Techiman during the last Bono-Asante conflict (about 1877) still maintain contact with the family head in Techiman State.

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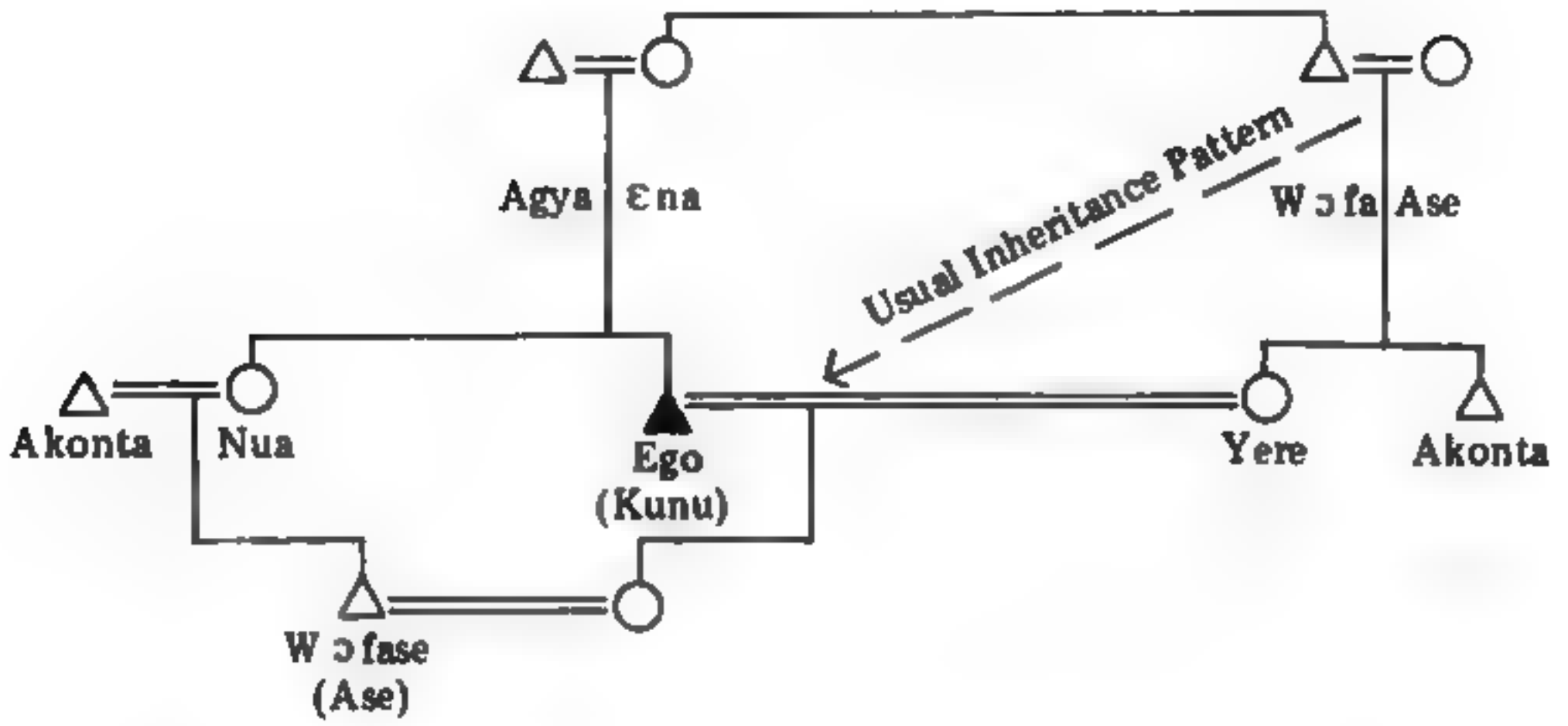
CHART I

Bono Preferred Marriage and Inheritance Model



Despite the matrilineal and patrilineal elements present in the Techiman-Bono society the neat system of matrilineal (*abusua*) and patrilineal (*ntoro*) names as described for the Asante is not as clear in the Bono area. An Akan proverb used by the Bono states "*abusua baako, mogya baako*" ("one matrilineage, one blood"). Matrilineal descent is responsible for Bono laws for inheritance of property, succession to stools, and marriage. The *mogya* (blood) of the *abusua* is passed down the female line as long as there are females to transmit it. For the Asante, however, the *ntoro*(spirit) is passed down the male line as long as there is a male descendant to transmit it; a female cannot transmit the *ntoro* she has received from her father. Sociologically, among the Asante, the *ntoro* is less important than the *abusua*, and is used primarily to help decide prohibited marriages. The fact that both the matrilineal element (*abusua*) and the patrilineal element (*ntoro*) are present in Asante society has raised the typological question as to whether they are a matrilineal society or one characterized by double descent. In 1940 Murdock called the Asante system a double descent system with matri-sibs (*abusua*) and patri-sibs (*ntoro*). In *Social Structure* he modified this, calling the system matrilineal with a patrilineal extension (Murdock 1967:306). Besides Murdock, Herskovits, Nadel, Radcliffe-Brown, and Christen-

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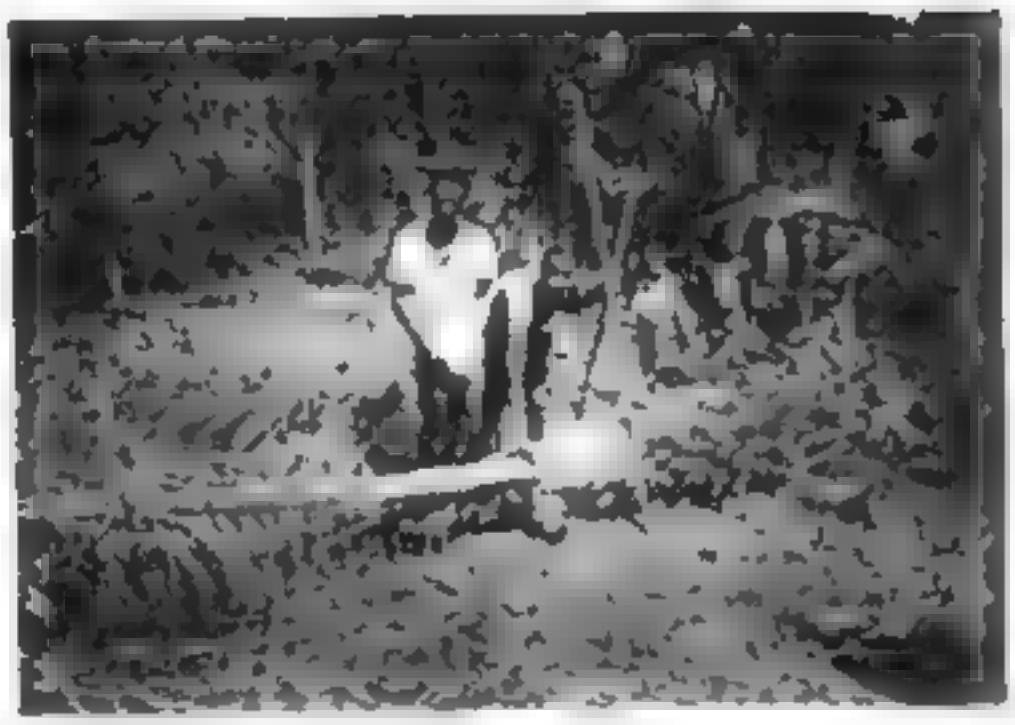
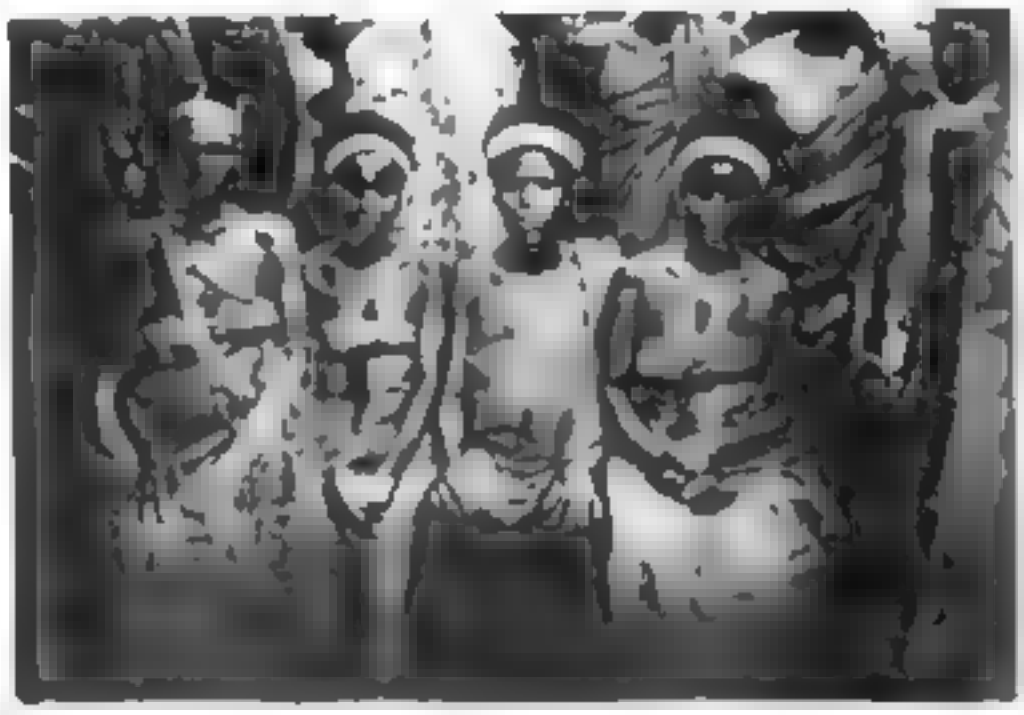
Yam tubers ready for sale in the Techiman Friday market.



An oil palmtree felled at Koase for palm-wine which drips into the black pot.

Young children and infants are frequently carried on their mother's or older sister's back.



Mourners from the immediate family at the funeral for the Techiman Tigare priest.

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sen have called the Asante (and the Fante) system one of double descent (see discussion in Goody 1961). Goody characterizes these societies as "matrilineal systems with complementary agnatic groups named" (Goody 1961:12). Fortes follows this tangent; "often cited as a straight-forward example of double descent . . . it can be shown in reality to be based on matrilineal descent with extended recognition of complementary patrifiliation" (Fortes:58). Fortes and Goody reject the classification of the Asante kinship system as one of double descent, saying social systems which recognize both lines are numerous, but "the phrase 'double descent' is best reserved for those societies in which succession to property, other than ritual paraphernalia, is divided between both patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups" (Goody 1955:103). Christensen, working among the Fante, a coastal Akan group, felt that Murdock's definition of double descent did not imply equality of kin groups of lineages; "by double descent is meant that the individual is simultaneously a member of two distinct exogamous lineages" (Christensen:3).

Rattray, in his visit to Techiman in the early 1920s, was surprised to find, despite the many Akan oral histories which trace the Akan origins to the Bono area, "that the pure Brong [Bono] are apparently wholly ignorant of these Ashanti and Fanti clan names, and that their exogamous divisions seem based upon an entirely different model." In Tekiman [sic] one does not ask, "To what *abusua* (totemic clan) do you belong?" but "In what street (*abrono*) do you reside?" There, such exogamous divisions as appear to exist apparently take their names from streets or quarters in the towns. If my information be correct, we have here a problem of considerable interest to students of Gold Coast history" (Rattray 1929:64). During the Techiman census interviews, when asking for an interviewee's matrilineal and patrilineal affiliation, most faltered completely on the patrilineal side, usually giving the same name, or a synonym, for that given for the matrilineage. Initially, this was felt to be an indication of social change with the kinship system being of less importance for the young, but the older generation—even those who had been born in exile in the Gyaman area—did not relate a patrilineal name as listed in ethnographic sources for other Akan societies. The names of streets and wards referred to by Rattray are probably the original clan names of the Techiman Grade I chiefs, since clan members tended to live in the same section of town. Even today the sections or wards of Techiman bear such names (see Map VII), names given by many Techiman inhabitants in the census interviews for both matrilineage and patrilineage. An explanation for this disparity was

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sought from many Bono but no single satisfactory answer was found. That the kinship system was disrupted after the last war with the Asante (1877) when a long period of exile was coupled with considerable intermarriage with members of other societies is one explanation. According to one Bono historian the Asante-Bono War resulted in the destruction of the Bono *nton* (patrilineal) system. (The Bono, unlike other Akan, use the term *nton*, not *ntoro*). After the Asante-Bono War the Techiman chief allowed his people to marry from any *nton*. The only prohibited marriage was between two people owing allegiance to the same stool—that is, from the same matrilineage (*abusua*). People from the same *nton* married, until many people forgot the name of their *nton*. One former paramount chief blamed Christianity and its disregard of taboos for the demise of the Bono *nton* system.

Bono kinship terminology is exactly as that found among the Asante. Ego calls his Fa, FaBr, FaSiHu, and MoSiHu *agya*. MoBr, head of the matrilineage, is called *wɔfa*. Mo, FaBrWi, and MoSi are called *ɛna*. All second generation ascendants and descendants are called *nana* regardless of sex; this term is also used in addressing any elder or chief. Ego's Wi is *yere*, Ego as husband is called *kunu*. Because of the matrilineal system, Ego's MoBrDa's child may be his own child if he marries MoBrDa, or his wife, because if he does not choose to marry his MoBrDa, he then has marriage rights to her daughter. A brother or sister-in-law on either the husband's or wife's side is called *akonta*. A brother or sister is called *nua* (*kuma*, younger; *panin*, elder). Ego's child is called *ba*. FaSi (*sewa*) and MoBr (*wɔfa*) produce the cross-cousins which it is preferred that Ego marry. Ego's WiSi may be termed both *akonta* or *yere kuma*. WiFa, WiMo, SoWi, and DaHu are all called ase, in-law. SiSo, SiDa, MoSiDaSo, MoSiDaDa are all called *wɔfase*, nephew/niece.

Kinship terms are used very loosely as terms of address, the relative age of two individuals being the primary determining factor which overrides actual blood relationships. Teknonymy is also very extensively used. As among other Akan groups the Bono believe that one's origins should not be revealed. Some of the inhabitants of the Techiman state are second or third generation offspring of war captives brought back to the Bono area. These offspring, the results of multiple intermarriages with Bono, have been easily absorbed into the Bono matrilineages (*abusua*).

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Part III

Life Cycle

A. Birth, Naming, and Childhood

In the Bono life cycle, the traditional importance of children, and their function in maintaining the matrilineages through time, holds true today. Every Bono libation includes the prayer for many children, every Bono shrine has female visitors seeking medicine to become pregnant and to deliver successfully through the power of the deity, and every day many women deliver both at home and at the Holy Family Hospital in Techiman. With the rapid increase in school attendance and its result in fewer early marriages, along with a lower regard for the traditional morality, many school girls end undesired pregnancies—rather than terminate their schooling—through abortions, using both traditional and modern methods.

According to Bono values, it is considered unwise for a birth to follow a preceding birth too soon. After a woman gives birth, the minimal period before she should get pregnant again is a year; usually a two-year interval between the birth and a succeeding pregnancy is considered desirable. After a first-born child, the mother is to abstain from sexual intercourse for at least six months; after succeeding births a 40-day period is deemed sufficient. There are no legal sanctions which can be brought against a couple who do not respect the one to two year period during which a succeeding pregnancy should not take place, although a woman who bears children in rapid succession is called *ntetewa* and it will be said of her, " *ɔwo ntetewaa*," "she bears children in close succession." Since children are breast fed for several years, a newly born child following a preceding birth too closely will put a strain on the mother and result in nutritional deficiency in both children. Often the older child becomes neglected, resulting in various degrees of kwashiorkor. The traditional explanation for this condition is that the older child becomes jealous of the younger one.

The traditional birth control methods, which seem efficient, utilize various herbal mixtures which are either introduced into the

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rectum of the woman in a liquid state or introduced into the vagina; in a few instances the fresh, oozing leaf stalk of a certain plant is inserted into the cervix. This is usually done within a few days after the time when the woman's period should have begun, so if the delay is, in fact, due to a conception, it is at such an early stage that it can be easily aborted and regarded as a late menstrual period. Much of this type of traditional birth control procedure is becoming less necessary since the Public Health Service in Techiman now supplies free birth-control pills.

A pregnant woman must avoid looking at monkeys or other things which, it is felt, may affect the physical characteristics of her child. It is also considered improper to comment upon a woman's pregnant state.

Many Techiman-Bono women go to the hospital to give birth. However, virtually every older Bono woman functions as a midwife in the society and the birth may take place in the pregnant woman's mother's house; alternatively, the mother or a sister may come to help in the delivery in the woman's own room. Men are not allowed to be present during a home delivery. After the birth, the father of the child will be called. The afterbirth, like miscarriages, is put in a calabash or a clay pot with a lid and the husband, father or brother of the woman, or an old woman in the house buries it near the house. Either a friend or a relative of the mother can cut the umbilical cord; the new razor blade which is used is not to be used for anything again. A corncob is held lengthwise to measure the cord to about five to six inches away from the child's body, where it is cut, the edge of the cut being tied with a thread.

Immediately after the baby is born the elder women clean the body of the baby with either palmoil or water to which a little kerosine has been added. This is supposed to clean the baby so well that in later years the person will not have excessive body odor even when sweating profusely.

If a woman dies prior to giving birth, or dies during childbirth, the baby is removed from her womb and buried separately. An infant who dies within a few days after birth is wrapped in cloth and buried perfunctorily in the forest by a male or an old woman. Babies a year or so old will be buried (either in the forest or in the town cemetery) in a small box, again without ceremony.

At birth a Techiman-Bono child is given a day-name (*kra din*; "soul name") according to Chart II.

On the eighth day after birth the child is considered to be a human being and a family name is chosen for it; the mother is not allowed to name the child. The father has this right and may name

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CHART II

Bono-Twi Day-Names

Day (English)	Day (Twi)	Male Day-Name	Female Day-Name
Sunday	Kwasida	Kwasi	Akosua
Monday	Dwoada	Kwadwo	Adwoa
Tuesday	Benada	Kwabena	Abenaa
Wednesday	Wukuada	Kwaku	Akua
Thursday	Yawoada	Yaw	Yaa
Friday	Fiada	Kofi	Afua
Saturday	Memeneda	Kwame	Amma

the child after his own father, mother, uncle, or another relative. He can also name the child after one of his wife's relatives, but not after the wife herself; such a choice often reflects the closeness between the man and his wife. On this eighth day (although now the exact day is not regarded as being highly important) two ceremonies are performed, in most cases very perfunctorily. The father must provide money and cloth for both the new child and the mother, and a mat and a chamber pot for the child. At the same time the child is given its family name; today this ceremony is quite unimposing. Traditional naming ceremonies are not accompanied by music or dancing.

The name picked is often that of a revered relative whose qualities it is hoped the child will assume. Should a man name his child after his own father (the child's paternal grandfather), the grandfather must provide the child with a gold ring and some money. Many names are circumstantial, however; birth positioning, for example, is important. A male twin is called *Atta*, a female twin, *Ataa*. A triplet is named *Ahenesa*. The child born after twins is always named *Tawiah*, the second child after twins, *Nyankomago*, the third after twins, *Atuakosan*, and the fourth after twins, *Damusaa*. If the twins are of the same sex they may be differentiated by junior *(kuma)* or senior *(panin)*, the first twin to emerge from the womb being called junior since it was sent by the senior twin (who emerges second) to check out the state of the world. *Manu* is the name for a second-born; a first-born may be called *Piesie* (although it is not a formal name); a third-born who is male is called *Mensah* (sometimes this is given to the third male born to a woman) while a third-born who is female is called *Mansa* (this name is also given to the third female born to a woman), the fourth child may be called *Anane*, the fifth, *Num*, the sixth, *Nsia*, the seventh, *Nsoa*, the ninth, *Nkrumah*, the tenth, *Badu* the eleventh,*Duko*, and thirteenth, *Adusa*. A child born on a *dabone* (a day in terms of the 42-day calendar considered to be bad or evil) may be called *Dapaa*, *Fokuo*, *Nkyifie*, or *Krubena*. The

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child might be named after the place where he was born; e.g., a child born by chance in the Techiman Sacred Forest *(Amanfomu)* may be called *Amanfo.* A child born after many preceding children have died may be named *Donko* (literally, "slave") or *Mossi* (after the Upper Voltaian ethnic group); most of these children are known as (but not named) *abagyinaba*, a child taken to a shrine *(ɔbosom)* for protection. A child obtained through the assistance of a shrine may be termed (again not named), an *ɔbosom ba* (a child of the deity). These two types of children can often be distinguished by a hair style similar to that of a priest and they must undergo religious ceremonies at the shrine before the hair can be removed at an age at which it is unlikely that they will die. Many of these children are named *Nyamekyɛ* (a gift from God).

Children who are twins *(ntaa)*, are born after twins *(Tawiah)*, or second-born after twins *(Nyankomago)* have an added tabooed food, a type of bush rat. A wife must observe her husband's tabooed food, although he need not observe her own. An explanation for this is that should the woman eat the child's father's tabooed food some of it would pass into the child through the mother's breast milk and the child might become sick. If the child becomes sick, through this or for any other reason, it is brought to the father—if he lives in a residence different from that of the mother—since the father's spirit *(sunsum)* is supposed to help protect the child. It is said that if a child does not respect the father the father's *sunsum* becomes incapable of protecting the child.

Traditionally there was neither clitorectomy nor circumcision among the Bono. Today there is still no clitorectomy for girls, although most Bono males are circumcised. All male children born at the hospital are circumcised; those born at home are circumcised soon after birth, usually by a Muslim Hausa barber who has a special knife for the operation. This is a small ceremony with the parents and a few close friends in attendance. Anyone in a royal clan who has a potential chance of becoming a chief may remain uncircumcised since, traditionally, a chief must not have spilled blood through any wound.

After any child has grown to at least a few months of age it undergoes a short "vaccination" ritual known as *aniasetwa* ("cutting beneath the eye"); this is to prevent a condition called convulsions *(ɛsoro)* which attacks and kills many infants and children in the Bono area. Usually an herbalist or a priest in his role as herbalist, using a new razor blade (which is never to be used for anything else again) cuts a small horizontal quarter-inch-wide incision at cheekbone level under one of the eyes; black incinerated powered medi-

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cine to prevent *esoro* is then rubbed into the incision. This is usually done when the parents feel the child is growing old enough to be susceptible to the *esoro* condition or, sometimes, after such symptoms have been manifested by the child itself.

When the child begins to cut its deciduous teeth it is taboo to mention the appearance of the teeth; anyone who talks about the teeth must provide the child with an egg, which is cooked, part of which is rubbed against the first tooth to ensure that the other teeth will come in correctly.

Infants and young children, like adults, must bathe at least twice a day, upon rising in the morning and prior to retirement at night. A young child may also be required to sit periodically in water mixed with herbs *(dudo)* as a tonic to assure good health and strength. Diapers are infrequently worn and, in warm weather, most infants and young children are not clothed. Toilet training begins at about one year of age, the child being taught to sit upon a chamber pot, the waste later being discarded in the toilet. A child who defecates on the floor is not punished; the feces is covered with sand and swept up by the young children in the household. Most children grow up without the anal-oral syndromes familiar in Western psychology. The younger children are expected to assist with many household chores, including the bathing, feeding, and tending of infants, cooking, sweeping and cleaning, washing and ironing, and farming. By the time a Bono child has reached puberty he or she is fully matured and capable of running a household.

B. Puberty

There is no formal puberty ceremony, initiation, or bush-school for males in Bono society; girls, however, may go through a ceremony called *Bragoro* (*bra*, menses; *goro*, play). Traditionally this event was very important in the life of a maturing Bono girl since she was considered to be of marriageable age after the ceremony. This is the only ceremony at which females (usually old women) may play drums, but only the *donno* or hour-glass type. There is a long repertoire of *Bragoro* songs in Bono society. Many girls now substitute Christian or Muslim ceremonies which provide formal recognition of their maturity. Other parents provide a less formal ceremony at home marking the occasion.

Regardless of the type of ceremony chosen, all Techiman-Bono females, whether Muslim, Christian, or those who follow the traditional Bono religion must be inspected by the queenmother after the girl begins menstrating. This is an official check on whether the girl is pregnant, but it is carried out in an informal atmosphere. The queen-

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mother records the girl's name and age, then inspects her stomach and breasts. A receipt is issued to those who pass the test. If it is found that the girl appears to be pregnant within three months after the inspection, it is considered that she was in an early stage of pregnancy during the inspection and she still fails the examination; a young girl, then, must not give birth until a full twelve months after the inspection.

If the girl is found to be pregnant upon the queenmother's inspection or within three months after it, the pregnancy is considered to be a state offense, no receipt is given by the queenmother, and a traditional court case is brought against the girl's parents and her lover's parents. Sometimes the public learns of a girl who is pregnant prior to her inspection; inevitably someone informs the queenmother, who will have a palace spokesman send for the girl and her family. If the girl proves to be pregnant, the case goes immediately to the palace where the entire Techiman Traditional State Council rules upon it. Once the girl has successfully passed the three-month period after the inspection, should she get pregnant later, even prior to a marriage, the pregnancy is not a state case and is dealt with as a house-case.

Christian and Muslim girls who pass the queenmother pregnancy inspection usually forego a traditional *Bragoro* and in place of this have a church or mosque ceremony called *nhyira* (blessing); it is said, "We put blessings upon her." The Christian girls wear white to church; the Muslim girls dress in their best finery. During the services the event is announced to the congregation who then pray that the girl will get married and have many successful deliveries in the future. The parents, grandparents and siblings of the girl give her gifts such as jewelry, clothes, and a trunk for her valuables. Friends of the mother may also give gifts to the girl such as a chicken which the girl can keep with the hopes that it will breed and produce offspring. At this type of ceremony, there is neither drumming nor dancing at the house.

Those who still choose to have a traditional *Bragoro* ceremony are often villagers. Following a set ritual, on an appointed day red *ɛto* (mashed yams mixed with palm oil) and eggs are cooked and the *ɛto* is touched to the girl's mouth three times before she eats it; the rest she eats with her girl friends. Old ladies are paid to play the *donno* drums and to sing *Bragoro* songs. The girl is led by two girls dressed only in beads, gold jewelry, and long female loin cloths, and smeared with shea butter; the girl herself usually dresses in *kente* cloth while greeting the townspeople, especially those related to her. Many of her relatives give her gifts of money. If she has many rela-

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tives in other towns and villages she may travel to them to announce her maturity in the same manner. The *brafoɔ* (the girl going through the ceremony) is accompanied by many girl friends while greeting the relatives.

Although the *Bragoro* ceremony is not held as frequently as in the past, menstruation is still viewed by most Bono as an impure state. No Bono woman will have sexual intercourse during her menstrual period. Even today, regardless of her religious affiliation, a menstruating woman would never think of entering a Bono traditional shrine room or an ancestral stool room. Many traditional priests still have their wives spend their menstrual periods in a small hut apart from the main house, especially if the shrine has a menstrual taboo.

C. Sexual Relationships and Marriage

There are a number of culturally-recognized types of male-female sexual relationships in Bono society. Only heterosexual relationships are acceptable. Celibacy, homosexuality and lesbianism are not socially recognized in Bono society and there are no words in Bono-Twi for any of these concepts. Although male friends often hold hands or even dance together publicly, obvious signs of homosexuality in Western cultures, the entire idea of homosexual activity is unknown and appears to be beyond the scope of reality for the Bono. In the secondary boarding school where hundreds of students live together, a female student may share the same bed with a girl friend; this female friend of a girl is called *supi* but the term does not have the sexual connotations which lesbianism has in the West.

Sexual foreplay and the concept of romance differ greatly between the Bono and Western cultures. Although the Bono enjoy a full range of sexual positions, with both male and female assuming the superior position, oral or group sex are activities which even Westernized Bono cannot understand or accept. Romance is a concept taken from Western movies, but in the Bono context there need be no psychological or emotional component, romance being equivalent to petting in the American sense of the word. Romance as petting activity is important mainly for the younger generation, especially those boarding in the secondary schools where they are more influenced by Western ideas. Kissing and sexual foreplay in the form of fondling of the breasts and vagina would be considered more irregular by a villager or a non-Westernized Bono.

In the Techiman Zongo one can find about twenty professional prostitutes, most of whom are from the Krobo ethnic group located

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near Accra. They are organized on the market union model and have a queenmother who is in charge of their community. There are Bono prostitutes but they do not operate on home ground; most of them go to the Ivory Coast, usually to Abidjan. Prostitutes are often called *tuutuufoɔ*, the name being derived from "two [*tuu*] shillings, two *[tuu]* shillings," the original charge for one visit.

Another category of women is the *gyantra* (a possible corruption of the English, "gentlewoman"), also called the *ahyawe* (taken from the Yoruba word for prostitute or promiscuous female); these ladies are usually unmarried, often have young children, and frequently have a regular source of income. These "good-time girls" spend much of their off-hours in the local bars, and they share their company and sexual favors quite freely, any charge depending upon the relationship established with the male.

Among the Bono, it is difficult to learn who is having a sexual alliance with whom since much of this activity is kept at a private level, many relationships being held in strictest confidence. Male braggadocio as found in the American teenage context, for example, would be considered highly irregular in the Bono context. There is no strict equivalent of the Western concept of platonic love; should a male be seen conversing with a female in a public place the first assumption would be that he was attempting to arrange a sexual alliance for himself, or, more likely, for a mutual friend. Dating in the Western sense is unknown among the Bono. Sex is never indulged in publicly; one never sees males and females holding hands, kissing, petting, or having even more intimate contact in any place where they might be seen. The Western openness to such things is considered appalling to the Bono.

The term "friend" does not translate on a one-to-one basis into Bono-Twi; its use in Ghanaian English normally refers to someone of the opposite sex with whom one has sexual relations (a person termed *mpena*); to "befriend" means to have sex with a person. The Bono-Twi term *adamfoɔ* (usually translated into English as "friend") can be used to describe relationships between individuals of the same sex; if used by a person to describe a relationship with someone of the opposite sex, that person would usually be related either consanguineally or affinally in such a way that sexual intercourse between the two persons would be either taboo or considered highly deviant. In only this latter sense, involving a joking relationship, may there be platonic, "friendly" relationships between the sexes. The usual adult male-female relationship among the Bono centers upon the term *olomo*, and its synonym, *mpena*; these terms can be used to describe either partner in an unmarried, regular,

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"friendly" sexual relationship. Such a relationship may develop, of course, into one involving strong emotional ties and lead to marriage.

The *mpena* relationship, when it evolves into a type of common-law marriage, is called *mpena-wadeɛ* (*mpena* marriage); this is quite common today but neither party has any legal power over the other should one or the other be unfaithful or break the relationship. Should the female die in such an informal union, the male may be required by the girl's family to bear the entire cost of the burial and funeral.

The traditionally-accepted Bono marriage, which is also recognized by the Ghanaian government, is formalized by a set procedure which is both less involved and less costly than marriages observed for patrilineal societies such as the Dagomba, Hausa, or Yoruba who live in Techiman. A marriage ceremony is called *ayeforo;* marriage is called *aware.* A few child betrothals and maternal cross-cousin marriages are still made but they are increasingly difficult to enforce among the younger generation which prefers more freedom in the selection of a mate. A man may marry his wife's sister as a second wife but only if the two girls are twins. The sororate exists only in the case of the paramount chief who has "stool wives" *(ayete)* contributed by the clans of various subchiefs; if a stool wife dies she must be replaced, possibly by a sister. The levirate exists for all Bono individuals, although the widow has the right to reject a marriage to her deceased husband's brother.

If a male and female find each other mutually attractive and are interested in marriage, as long as they are not of the same matrilineage *(abusua),* the male will inform his parents. If the parents agree, they will have the man's *wɔfa* (MoBr) go to the woman's parents to inform them. The woman's *wɔfa* must also be informed prior to any decision being made by her parents. This initial step used to inform the woman's family of the man's interest is called "knocking on the door," and a bottle of schnapps is usually presented to the woman's family, who will set a date for the man's family to return for an answer. In the meantime the woman will be queried as to the genuiness of her interest in the potential match. On the return date the man's family are given either an affirmative or negative response; either the woman or her *wɔfa* may disagree to the match. Nothing is exchanged at that meeting, but should the response be positive, the man's side will ask what they must do to formalize the marriage bond. The prospective husband is usually asked to present a fixed amount of money and a fixed number of bottles of schnapps to the woman's family and to provide the woman with cooking utensils, a full set of traditional cloth, headkerchiefs, a

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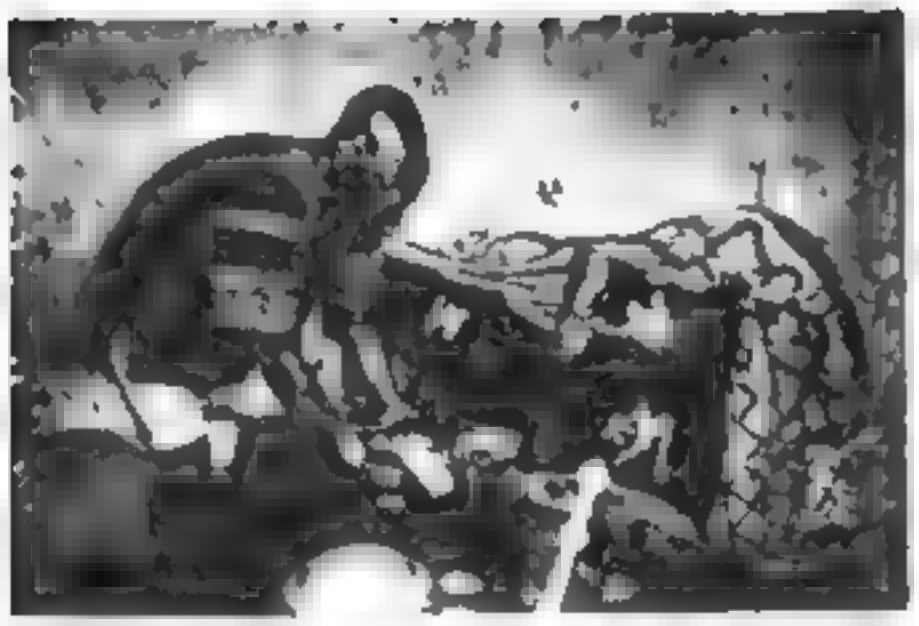
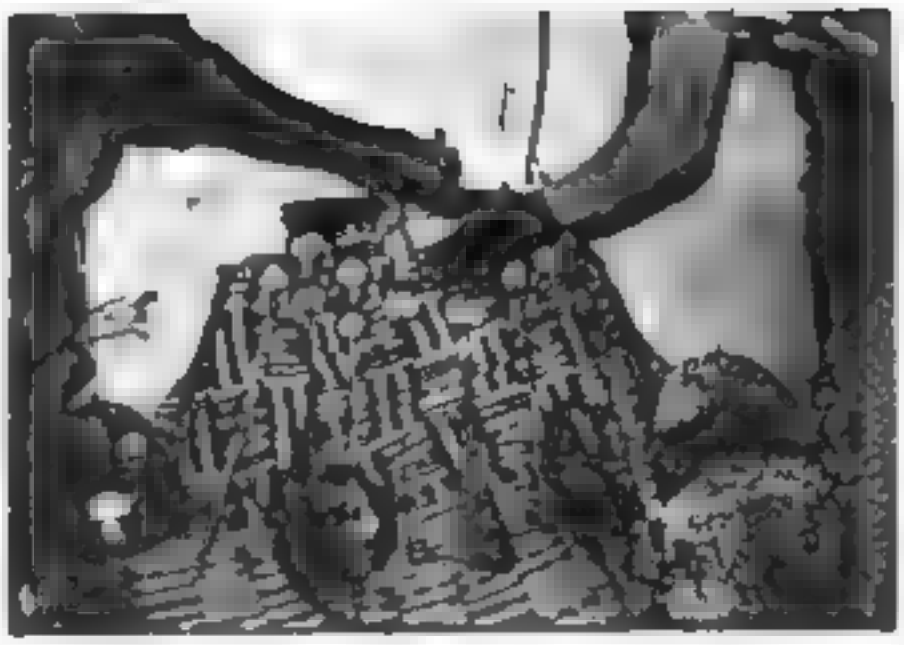
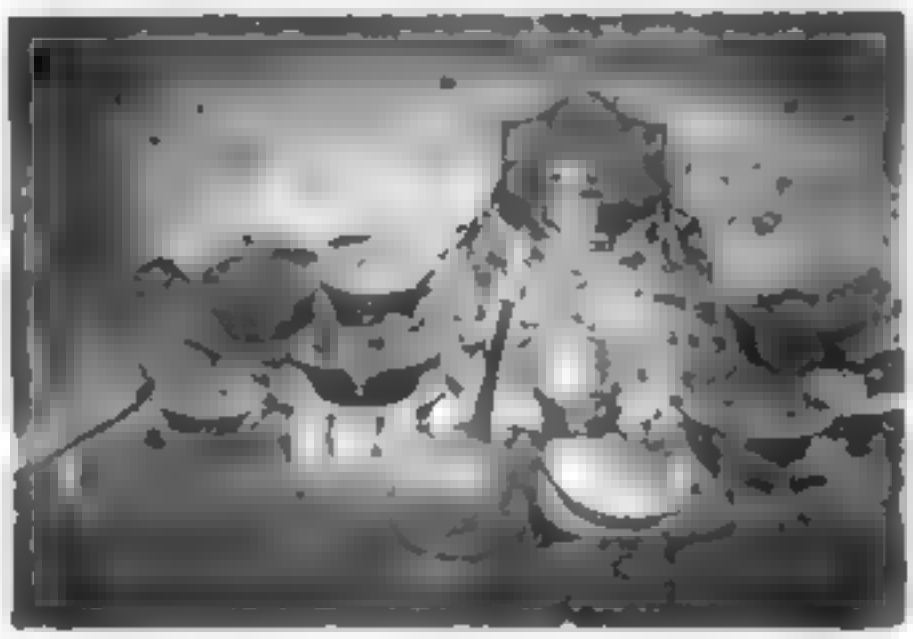


The Konahene of Techiman-Bono State, Nana Kwabena Dwomo, is also chief of Tanoboase. Here he pours a libation of palmwine before his matrilineal ancestral stools which are turned on their sides.



Nana Kwabena Dwomo is also custodian for the highest Tano shrine for the Akan, called Taa Kora. Here a libation is poured to *Onyame*. Note the rich regalia around the brass-pan shrine.

A Tano shrine called Asubɔntɛn at Besedan. Shrines, like chiefs, reside on stools, the Bono symbol of political authority. The egg symbolizes goodness, purity, and fertility.



All Tano shrines are ultimately related to Taa Kora. Such proliferation of shrines is evident in the Atiokosaa shrine room at Tanoso where, as the family lineage has segmented, Atiokosaa has spawned sons, one for each new lineage.

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sleeping mat, and a female stool, which is symbolic of the fact that the male is giving the woman the chance to sit in his house. Another date is then set for the families to assemble for the presentation of the money and drinks. Prior to the presentation the woman's family asks her if she loves the man who desires to marry her; she must respond "Yes" so that all the people gathered together for the marriage can hear her and thus act as witnesses. The woman next must say "drink it," before the schnapps can be opened for libations and drinking. The woman is then presented to the man. If the bride is young, another day is set during which her mother will cook for her and then, along with sisters and friends, lead her to her husband's house. The final payment (called the "head wine" or "head money") can be paid at the same time as the marriage ceremony or at a later date after the bride has given birth, and it finalizes the marriage bond between the husband and wife and between their two families.

Once a couple has completed the traditional marriage ritual, any male who intentionally touches the wife's buttocks, breasts, head hair, or nose can be fined in the traditional court.

Techiman-Bono Muslims may carry out the traditional marriage ceremonies prior to taking the Islamic vows at the mosque. Under strict Islamic law the father or *wɔfa* (MoBr) cannot accept money for the daughter and many Muslims take full advantage of this. The man is, however, expected to provide the new bride with a dress.

Very few Bono Christians marry in the church as it places the marriage under the restrictions of the Marriage Ordinance Act of Ghana which covers both church and court marriages. Many Techiman Christians avoid the legal binding of a Christian marriage by marrying traditionally, then going to church for a blessing of the relationship. In my four years residence in Techiman only one court marriage was witnessed, that of an Englishman marrying a Techiman girl. Their marriage, in the Sunyani court on 10 April 1970 was the second such Ordinance marriage to be recorded for the year 1970 in the entire Brong-Ahafo Region (the first such marriage recorded for 1970 was one by a Ghanaian physician). Only one church wedding took place, and it involved two persons of the Krobo ethnic group who were living in Techiman; they had been married traditionally for a number of years and had already had four children. It was done primarily for prestige. Christian and civil-court marriages are rare partly because of their relatively higher cost (including marriage feast) and the disadvantages for men, making it impossible for legal, plural marriage and difficult for divorce, especially if one of the

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partners is barren. Moreover, the civil laws for inheritance apply to those persons married in churches or courts. Although statutory marriage was established with the Marriage Ordinance of 1884, from that date until 1960 for the entire country of Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) only 604 such marriages were recorded. Most women would prefer this type of marriage; "it gives the woman greater social status and the right of inheritance over the husband's estate in case of death, and . . . the woman can claim alimony if he marries anyone else"—the very reasons why the vast majority of Christian males refuse to accept this type of marriage (Harries:418). Ghanaian law recognizes customary, Ordinance (Christian or civil), and Islamic marriage. Most of Ghanaian law is English, but "the English law of Ghana is *not* the current law of England . . but is the law of England as it stood in 1874, as modified and added to thereafter by local legislation" (Allott:167). In the Marriage Ordinance of 1884 "no account is taken of African indigenous ideas as to prohibited degrees and descent" and "no consents from those who would customarily give their consent to a union (e.g., the family-head) are required" (Allott:175). Also in Ghana "there is a Married Women's Property Ordinance, based on the English Married Women's Property Act, 1882" (Phillips:283); these ordinances apply to those married under the Marriage Ordinance. In Ghana two-thirds of one's property is distributed "in accordance with the provisions of the law of England relating to the distribution of the personal estates of intestate in force of the 19th day of November 1884, any native law or custom to the contrary notwithstanding; and one-third in accordance with the provisions of the native customary law which would have obtained if such person had not been married under this Ordinance" (Phillips:284). Of the two-thirds distributed under English law, one-third goes to the wife and the other third is shared equally among the children; if there are no children, the wife takes the full two-thirds. " 'Intestate' means dying without leaving a will in English form; if the deceased left only a customary will, he dies intestate" (Allott:178); hence marriage under the Ordinance disqualifies the traditional oral will *(samansew)*. Divorce is granted for the same reasons and it follows the same procedures as it did in England in 1884. A social survey done in Ashanti in 1960 showed 48% of the Asante claimed to be Christian while only 3% had been married under Christian (or civil) law; 15% claimed to be Muslim and 5% had been married under Islamic law; 28% claimed to follow the traditional religion, but 92% of the marriages were traditional. "Muslim marriage is contracted under the Marriage of Mohammedans Ordinance (Cap.

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129 of the Law of Ghana)." "When a person married under this Ordinance dies intestate, succession to his estate is in accordance with Mohammedan Law" (Birmingham:207).

After a marriage has been consummated the wife may move in with the husband. She might also move into a separate apartment or room, perhaps in a different household, which he provides. If he agrees the wife may remain with her mother and come to visit the husband at his room. It is considered a disgrace for a man to move in with his in-laws or to move into a room occupied by his wife prior to the marriage. Traditionally, the man has the right to force his wife to change her religion to that of his own; a refusal is grounds for divorce. If the woman is not competent in cooking, housekeeping, and sexual hygiene, a divorce may be sought. The wife is also expected to be polite to her husband's family and friends; if she is not, the man may divorce her. If the man beats the wife, or does not show respect to her family, the woman's family may take her back home. Should a man take a new wife without first obtaining permission from the first wife, she may sue for divorce. Usually the husband offers the first wife a sum of money given as a gesture of compensation *(mpata)*. If she takes the money, it serves as formal permission by her for her husband to marry again. If the wife refuses the *mpata* she may divorce the man. Should a man marry without the first wife's permission there may be constant clashes between the co-wives.

When Bono marriages go through periods of stress, standardized mechanisms exist to end the strife which may exist between spouses. If the quarrel remains unresolved the union may result in divorce. If a case results in divorce proceedings, either party has the right to initiate action against the other. If the man seeks the divorce, his father or MoBr *(wɔfa)* goes to inform the girl's parents and her *wɔfa* of the grounds for the action. If the case cannot be satisfactorily settled, the man takes back his final marriage payment. The woman's sisters-in-law can attempt to make her confess whether she has slept with any man other than her husband. If she confesses, the husband sends for the man and compensation is taken from him; this is done before the marriage is formally broken. The wife next must swear to the local gods as to the truth of her statements; her sisters-in-law then take some money from her. They, in turn, give the wife powered white clay which she smears on both a large and a small tree, saying "From today this man is no longer my husband." A woman can divorce a husband by returning the "head wine" which he had paid for the final marriage payment. In most cases the chil-

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dren remain with their mother, the man helping to support them. In cases of adultery the husband can legally take back all the items he had given the wife, in addition to the children.

D. Death

The living Bono are never far removed from those who have died; the dead are always remembered in prayers regardless of a person's religion. The Bono believe that when a person dies he goes to a place called *asamando*. If he was a good person his spirit *(saman)* can bring blessings to the living members of the matrilineage *(abusua)*. The stools of important chiefs, queenmothers, priests, priestesses, and lineage heads are the potential abodes for their owners' souls both during life and after death; a stool is always turned on its side when not in use to prevent the entrance of souls other than the owner's. After the death of such a person, his or her stool is enshrined in the matrilineage's stool room and it becomes a focal point for prayers which venerate the memory of the deceased and ask for intervention by the dead on behalf of the living. Some subchiefs keep only one ancestral stool, the symbolic focal point for all the souls of the deceased; the ancestral stools are always laid on their sides and usually are black from the eggs and blood of sacrifices, as well as from libations. Sometimes the omentum and fat of a sheep are conspicuously smeared on the seat of the ancestral stool (which is called an *apunnua*, meaning "blackened or sooty stool").

In comparison with the other Bono rites of passage, funerals are elaborate and public; in the two-year research period thirty-one funerals were attended by the author. Prior to a public announcement of a death, the corpse, whether male or female, is washed with new sponges by the elder women of the lineage. These women are not paid anything. (Muslims, on the other hand, utilize the services of several elderly Muslim ladies in the community who are given a few shillings for their help in the bathing of the corpse.) The corpse, having been bathed, is decorated with gold ornaments, dressed in *kente* cloth, and laid in state. It is believed that pillows stuffed with cotton are taboo at *asamando*, so pillows stuffed with soft grass are used, and later buried with the corpse. The deceased's son's daughter may sit next to the corpse to fan flies away.

After the body is prepared, the family, regardless of their religious affiliation, informs the paramount chief of the death and presents him with a bottle of schnapps which is used to pour a libation. At a traditional funeral food called *sense* is laid in front of the corpse

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of an elderly person, along with a cup of water; this is an invitation for all the family spirits *(nsamanfoɔ)* to come to partake. An elderly female has handmade beads placed in a brass pan before her body; these are buried with her. It is said that a spirit-woman called Amokye will not allow women without beads to pass into the ancestral realm. A sheep is slaughtered to purify the town and the lineage stool; this ritual is called the removal of misfortune or evil. Guns, frequently old Danish guns, are fired at intervals; Christians, however, seldom follow this particular custom. The corpse is usually buried the same or the day after death; the actual funeral *(ayie)* usually takes place a week or so later, after the entire extended family can be informed. The date may be extended further into the future if the family lacks sufficient financial resources. Ideally there are remembrance funeral ceremonies at one week, at two weeks, at 42 days, at 80 days, and at a year *(afrenhyia)* after a death, although ceremonies subsequent to the first-week funeral may be quite perfunctory. Christians perform only the first ceremony; after that they offer prayers for the dead during the regular church services.

It is not considered polite to remark directly that someone has died; for infants or young children it is said "he has turned himself"; for adults one might say "he has gone to the village" or "he has gone someplace." For chiefs it is said "a great tree has been uprooted."

There are several types of death which result in brief funeral ceremonies, the first-week ceremony being the only one performed. *Faa* refers to the first death to occur among any of the parents' children, regardless of the child's age or birth position; the parents are not expected to fast after such a death. A person said to be a *bayifoɔ* (witch) killed by a Techiman deity, or a person who commits suicide is also given a very brief funeral. Should the deceased be a young adult with older living siblings, a large funeral is taboo; it is felt that an elaborate ceremony would result in the early deaths of the living siblings. Again, only the one-week funeral ceremony is performed.

Muslim funerals follow Islamic law, but if the lineage of the deceased is composed primarily of persons who follow the Bono religion a syncretistic ceremony is performed with both Islamic and traditional elements present.

After the body has been laid in state for a traditional funeral, the women will sing dirges *(sudwom)*. The men smear red clay in lines on their bodies, wear a red-shaded funeral cloth, and chew kola nuts. The family members are expected to fast, which usually means

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abstinence from meat and from *fufu*, the staple food. For an entire week, friends and family come to express sympathy; they are provided with soft and alcoholic drinks, but do not make return donations until the actual funeral day. The night prior to the formal funeral, women gather and without weeping or wailing, clap and sing. Christians have a night of wake-keeping in the Church instead. At the traditional funeral drums are played, by both traditional and modern drumming groups. The traditional drums, especially at the funeral for a chief or priest, praise the deceased person for all that he did for his people.

Formerly in Techiman each Christian group had a separate cemetery; about 1952 one central cemetery on the Techiman-Wenchi road was opened and divided into sections for the followers of the Bono religion, Islam, and the various Christian sects. The Christian sections are conspicuously cleaner, being regularly weeded and decorated with flowers. Old, venerated family members who followed the Bono religion, or chiefs and priests, may still be buried in the house. The men who dig the burial hole are relatives and friends of the deceased.

After a death the family have funeral announcements printed and sent to relatives and friends. Telegrams are sent to inform relatives living in distant places. The procedures followed at a funeral follow the typical Bono system of greeting at social functions. Both men and women are expected to wear dark clothes to a funeral, especially hand-stamped *(Adinkra)* cloth. Close relatives wear pure black cloth. Often the relatives will buy the same funeral cloth to wear. White clothes or short pants are considered in very bad taste. A man will often buy his wife a funeral cloth to match his own. Close relatives go barefoot for forty days; close female relatives shave their heads. A large funeral may be held in a school yard, a small one in the family's compound. If held in a school yard, palm-front shades are provided along the entire periphery of the field and chairs are set under them. The mother's side of the family of the deceased sit on one side, the father's side of the family on the other. Guests occupy the other chairs. Upon approaching the grounds, a family member will lead a guest, if he is a stranger or a prominent person, to greet everyone already present and seated, moving from right to left regardless of the status of those seated or the guest. The guest greets the mourning family with "*Due!*" ("condolences"). After greeting, the family member provides the guest with a seat and, perhaps, with palmwine. Next, the members of both the male and female sides come to greet the guest and then they return to their seats. A spokesman from the

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female side comes to ask the guest's reason for coming; if the deceased is very important, a spokesman may come from each side of the family. The guest explains why he has come, then the spokesman relates the events of the death. Drinks are then presented by the spokesmen for both the female and the male sides of the deceased's family. The return donation expected depends upon the guest's relationship to the deceased, but it is usually figured in direct proportion to the amount of drinks accepted. If the person is presented with schnapps and does not want to present at least double its value as a funeral donation the spokesman can be told that beer is preferred. After the drinks have been accepted a suitable donation is made to each side of the family, usually less to the male side. Donations are made in parts or multiples of a Guinea (one pound, one shilling Sterling) even though the monetary system is now Ghanaian. For a donation of two beers and one soft drink a monetary presentation the equivalent of the Guinea would be considered appropriate. The amount of the presentation is announced and applauded. After this, formal receipts are given to the guest. The guest is then free to dance the funeral dance *(adowa)* and to mingle in the crowd to meet and talk with friends. Should the guest want to depart he must return to his seat and get the attention of one of the family spokesmen and ask for permission to leave; the spokesman then informs the head of the family who will grant permission by saying "the road lies there." Funerals are not solemn as they are in the Western world but are typified by drumming, drinking, and mingling throngs. Although Christians will bar traditional drumming at funerals, a brass band may be hired instead. The day following the funeral, representatives of the deceased's family will visit participants in the celebration to thank them for the donations given to help defray the debts incurred during the funeral.

A Muslim funeral is very inexpensive compared with the traditional or Christian ceremony. The body is wrapped and buried in a sheet; it may be transferred to the cemetery in a plain coffin which is used specifically for this purpose. The women who bathe the corpse and those who give formal prayers may be presented a small monetary token as thanks. The Ahmadiyyan sect of Muslims would, however, refuse any monetary thanks in return for prayers. A Christian or traditional funeral, because of elaborate coffins, bands, and drinks, is expensive.

Should a person be informed that a close relative has died in another town, friends of the person will come to give sympathy and

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may bring some drinks and donations to help defray their friend's expenses in traveling to and from the funeral.

One does not need a formal invitation to attend a Bono funeral; the more people who attend, the more honor is given the family of the deceased. Relatives and close friends, however, will be formally informed and are expected to attend.

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Part IV

Goverment and Law

A. Traditional Government

The Bono graded system of political authority is still an important factor in social control. Respect is given to and most disputes and offenses are settled at a series of levels of political authorities. The lowest level of authority is the husband in charge of a nuclear family unit within a compound house; above him is the head of the entire household (*fie-wura;* from *fie*, house and *wura*, master). Next in rank is one's *wɔfa* (MoBr)—who may also be the *fie-wura*. The person next in authority is the *abusua panin* (family or matrilineage, *abusua;* elder, *panin*), the oldest living member of a person's entire matrilineage. In most villages and towns outside of Techiman Township the next person in authority is the *ɔdekro* or head of a village; the chiefs of the nine largest towns in the state are known as Grade I chiefs, and it is they who sit on the traditional state council. The village heads are under the authority of these divisional chiefs who comprise the traditional state council. The highest traditional political authority is the paramount chief, the *Ɔmanhene* (Techimanhene). In reality, the queenmother (*ɔhemmaa*, or *ɔbaahemmaa*, derived from *ɔbaa*, woman and *ɔhene*, chief) is the ultimate power, having the absolute right of veto as well as final decision in the selection of a new paramount chief. Today, the Brong-Ahafo House of Chiefs and the National Chieftancy Secretariat are traditional authorities established by the national government which are superior to the Techimanhene's council. It is, of course, possible that the same individual could be the head of a nuclear family unit, head of the entire household, someone's *wɔfa* (MoBr), an *abusua panin*, and an *ɔdekro* (head of a village) or Grade I divisional chief on the *ɔmanhene*'s traditional council.

There are twenty-one chiefs, including the *Ɔmanhene*, who sit on the Techiman Traditional Council, all male except for the queenmother; twelve of them live in Techiman, and nine of them live in

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other large towns in the state, towns for which they are the chiefs. All twenty-one chiefs are stool holders and regard themselves as Grade I chiefs. Each Grade I chief has a full retinue of his subchiefs modelled upon the political structure of the Traditional State Council; for example, the heads of the villages which are under a Grade I chief of the Techiman Traditional State would comprise his own traditional council.

The *Gyaasehene*, *Ankɔbeahene*, *Afutuhene*, *Nifahene*, *Twafohene*, and the *Akyempemhene* each must provide the paramount chief with a stool wife *(ayete)*; the occupants of these stools can be, potentially, sons of the paramount chief, a patrilineal balance in a system strongly-biased matrilineally.

The Traditional Council meets every Friday, the main market day in Techiman. If one wants to greet the *Ɔmanhene* and his chiefs, or has a serious matter to discuss, the person must go to the palace and obtain permission to enter. Once inside, the person greets the seated chiefs moving from one's right counterclockwise towards the left. Normally the *Ɔmanhene*, seated on a pedestal, is greeted with a slight bow and an upturned right hand rather than with a Western handshake. Having greeted the chiefs, the person will be given a seat, followed by a calabash of palmwine; he will then be greeted verbally or by handshakes from the chiefs. One of the *Ɔmanhene*'s spokesmen then approaches the guest and asks his mission; the visitor rises and relates it himself or through his own spokesman, the chief's spokesman then relaying the messages to the *Ɔmanhene* who responds to them, again through his own spokesman. Presentations such as schnapps may then be made to the *Ɔmanhene* and some will be poured as a libation, usually by the *Akyeamehene*, the chief of the spokesmen, and the rest will be shared by those present. The chief may then provide the visitor with additional drinks. When the person desires to leave he asks permission through the chief's spokesman and the *Ɔmanhene* will grant it through this same spokesman. In the traditional political structure of Techiman Traditional State, Techiman is the capital of the state and the seat of the Techimanhene (*Ɔmanhene*). Many of the divisional chiefs (subchiefs), members of the Techiman Traditional State Council, also live in Techiman. Others, however, are also chiefs of the larger towns in the state. Every divisional chief, however, is responsible for smaller towns; only five towns of the 92 major towns and villages in the state are directly responsible to the *Ɔnanhene* himself.

The chiefs who are members of the royal clan, *Oyoko*, include the *Ɔmanhene*, the Queenmother, and the *Oyokohene*. The chiefs

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who are regarded traditionally as sons of the paramount stool (sons of the *Ɔmanhene*), are the *Gyaasehene*, the *Ankɔbeahene*, the *Afutuhene*, the *Nifahene*, the *Twafohene*, and the *Akyempemhene*. The *Akwamuhene* is considered to be the *wɔfa* of the *Ɔmanhene*'s stool. The *Barimhene* is the chief of the royal *(Oyoko)* burial ground.

The chiefs of the Techiman town royal clan, *Kona*, include the *Krontihene*, traditionally the founder of Techiman town before the capital of the Bono was moved from Manso, the *Konahene*, and the *Konkontiwahene*. War chiefs who are not regarded as sons of the paramount stool are the *Adontenhene*, the *Benkumhene*, and the *Kyidomhene*. The chief spokesman (the *Akyeamehene*) and the assistant spokesman (the *Adaatihene*) have five spokesmen (nonstool holders) under them. Two chiefs are in charge of the Techiman boundaries with the Asante (the *Ahyiayemhene*) and the Banda (the *Mponoahene*). The *Nkwankwaahene*, a nonstool holder, is traditionally in charge of the young men in the state.

Each divisional chief has specific duties. The *Krontihene* is the second in command and occupies the paramount position in the absence of the *Ɔmanhene*. The *Gyaasehene* is in charge of the palace attendants *(ahenkwa)*. The *Adontenhene* is the head warrior and the chief of the blacksmiths. The *Ankɔbeahene* (*ankɔ* , does not go; *bea*, anyplace) remains behind to protect the town and palace during wars. The *Akyeamehene* (*akyeame*, spokesmen) is the chief of the spokesmen and the *Adaatihene* (the incumbent is the father of the Queenmother)is the assistant chief spokesman. The *Twafohene* (*twa*, to cut) leads any battle and shoots the first gun; the *Nifahene* (*nifa*, right) leads the right flank during war and the *Benkumhene* (*benkum*, left) the left flank; the *Kyidomhene* (*akyi*, back) protects the rear. The *Akwamuhene* is the third in command. The *Oyokohene* is the head of the royal clan *(Oyoko)* and the *Konahene* the chief of the royal clan for the *Krontihene (Kona)*. The *Afutuhene* is the royal advisor to the *Ɔmanhene*. The *Barimhene* is in charge of the royal cemetery, and the *Konkontiwahene* is in charge of choosing and training a new *Ɔmanhene*. The *Mponoahene* is in charge of the Techiman boundary with the Wenchi-Bono Traditional State, the *Ahyiayemhene*, the boundary with the Offinso-Asante Traditional State.

B. Traditional Law

At the traditional state level destoolment cases brought against Grade I chiefs can be judged by the *Ɔmanhene*. Sometimes during

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enstoolment of new divisional chiefs troubles arise and the *Omanhene* must settle them. He can settle land and marriage cases if both the plaintiff and the defendant agree to have it settled traditionally. The *Omanhene* has the power to remove a case from the Ghanaian courts—even from the High Court—and try it at his court if the plaintiff and defendant desire this.

However, before someone brings a case to the *Omanhene*'s court, he must pay a summons fee and this fee is not fixed. The plaintiff can pay an equivalent of thirteen shillings Sterling (13/-), one Guinea (£ 1.1/-), or two pounds seven shillings (£ 2.7/-). Besides the summons fee, he must pay a fee which is given to the person who will summon the defendant. In the palace, the plaintiff first informs the clerk of the council. The *Akyeamehene* (chief of the spokesmen) is called and the money is given to him; he keeps the money and informs the *Omanhene* and the other chiefs. Having informed them, they appoint a committee consisting of three or four chiefs. This committee calls the two sides together and the case is investigated. After the case is judged by the committee, it informs the Traditional Council of its decision.

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Part V

Religious Beliefs and Rituals

A. Beliefs

The terms by which the Bono name the major religious institutions and their adhdherents in the state may be expressed as a three-level taxonomy (see Chart III). Each of the three major religions, Islam, Christianity, and the indigenous Bono religion, can be termed *Onyamesom* (*Onyame*, Supreme Being; *som*, to serve). In typical Bono discourse, Christianity is called *Onyamesom* or *Kristosom* (*Kristo*, Christ). Islam is termed *Onyamefrɛ* (*frɛ* to call) or *Nkramosom* (*Nkramo*, Muslim). The Bono religion is called *Abosomsom* (*abosom*, deities). The term *Wiasesom* is usually used to refer to purely worldly pursuits without regard for any spiritual beings (*wiase*, world). Christians sometimes use this term in a derrogatory manner to refer to the Bono religion.

Muslims are called *Onyamefrɛfoɔ* (*-foɔ*, those who) or *Nkramofoɔ* (from the Mande language, *Nkaramo*, Muslim). Followers of the Bono religion are called *abosomsomfoɔ* or, sometimes, *wiasefoɔ*. Christians are referred to as *Onyamesomfoɔ*, *Kristosomfoɔ*, or *Kristofoɔ*.

Muslim sects are divided into two categories, the Ahmadiyyan sect based in Rabwah, West Pakistan, and the traditional sects, which are lumped together under the term *Pepe Nkramosom*. Followers of the Ahmadiyyan Muslim sect are frequently called *Mohammediyyafoɔ* by non-Ahmadiyyans who have mistaken the name Ahmad for Mohammed; they are also frequently referred to as *Asante Nkramofoɔ* (Ashanti Muslims). The traditional Muslims from the north of the Bono are called *Pepe Nkramofoɔ* (*ɔpepeni* refers to anyone from north of the rainforest).

The Bono religion also has two broad divisions: one that centers on the Tano River deities *(Atano)*, which are enshrined in brass pans *(yawa)*, and one that centers on the witch-catching deities, the *abosommerafoɔ*. Likewise, Christian sects are divided into two main

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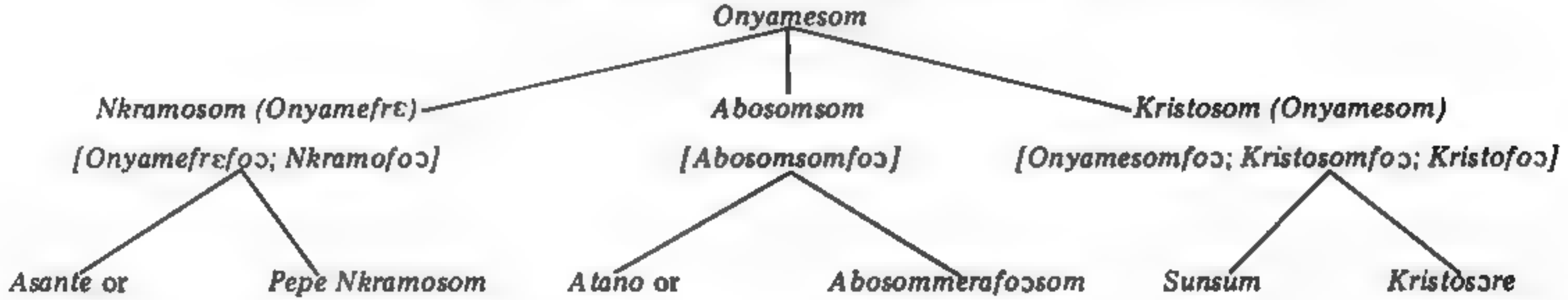
CHART III

Taxonomy of Religious Institutions and their adherents in Techiman Traditional State
(with names of their adherents in brackets)



groups. The spiritualist Christian churches are differentiated by the term *Sunsum Sɔre* (*sunsum*, spirit; *sɔre*, worship or church) and its adherents are known in general as *Sunsum sɔrefoɔ*, and in particular as members of specific sects (such as *Aladurafoɔ*). Nonspiritualist churches are often called *Kristosɔre* although the term can be legitimately applied to all Christian sects. Adherents of the nonspiritualist Christian sects are known either by the all-inclusive term *Kristofoɔ*, or according to the specific sect (e.g., Methodists are called *Wesleyanfoɔ*; Presbyterians, *Baselfoɔ*; Catholics, *Romanfoɔ*).

Any religious specialist among the Bono may be termed *ɔsɔfoɔ*. With the exception of several Christian priests and ministers, and the Ahmadiyyan missionary, the majority of the religious practitioners of all faiths in the state are part-time specialists, most combining farming with their religious duties. A Muslim leader may also be called *Mallam*. *Abosomfoɔ* (*abosom*, deities) and *akɔmfoɔ* (*akɔm*, possession) are the two main divisions of religious specialists in the Bono religion.

The *ɔbosomfoɔ* (*ɔbosom*, deity) must always be a male; he has a shrine of the Tano River brass pan variety, the shrine being a family heirloom. His position is inherited matrilineally. This type of priest must carry the shrine prior to going into a state of possession; many *abosomfoɔ* (plural) are possessed only while in the shrine room or in the shrine compound. These priests and the shrines which they tend do not catch *abayifoɔ* (witches).

The term *ɔkɔmfoɔ* (plural, *akɔmfo*) refers to two other types of religious specialist; a female *ɔkɔmfoɔ* (*ɔkɔmfoɔ baa*) may be the female counterpart of the *ɔbosomfoɔ* with one important exception; she may never carry her shrine even though its spirit may possess her. Another use for the term *ɔkɔmfoɔ*, which applies to both males (*ɔkɔmfoɔ barima*) and females, is to refer to individuals who become possessed by the spirit of a shrine although the possessed persons may not belong to the matrilineage which owns the shrine. These priests and priestesses become shrine attendants, but cannot inherit the *ɔbosomfoɔ* (or the *ɔkɔmfoɔ baa* should a female have inherited the position) should he die. They may become possessed at any time and at any place, even without carrying the shrine. Unlike the *ɔbosomfoɔ* or the *ɔkɔmfoɔ baa* who inherits a shrine, these *akɔmfoɔ* can leave a shrine and stop being religious specialists if they so desire. The religious practitioners occupying inherited positions, however, are bound by family duties to continue their work.

All religious specialists of all faiths are similar in being, ulti-

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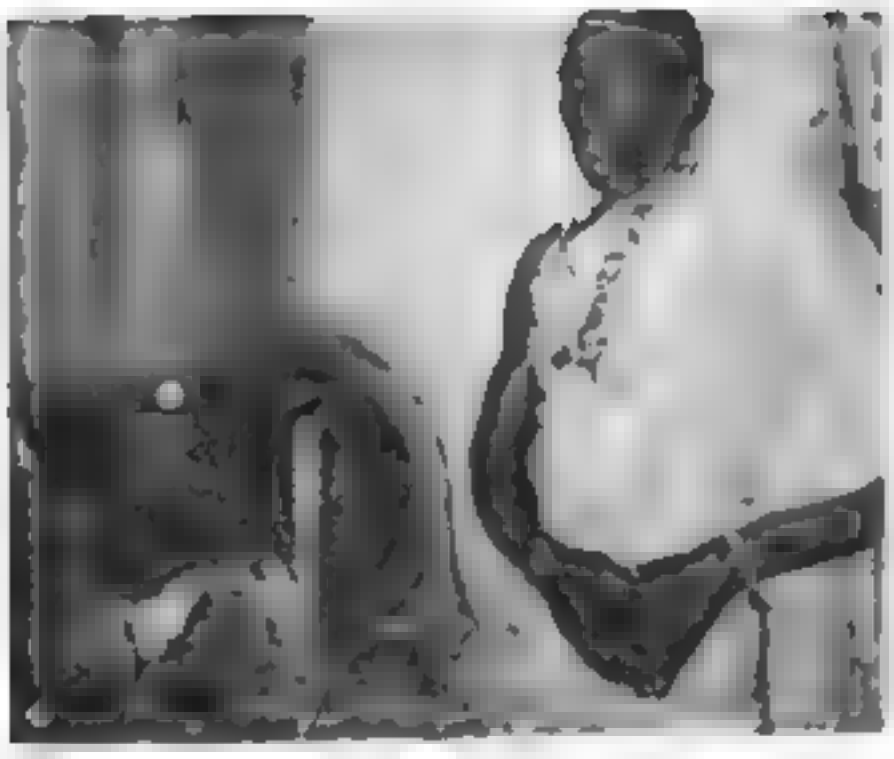

The highest shrine in Techiman Township is Taa Mɛnsah; the former chief of the Techiman state priests, Nana Kofi Mossi, is in attendance.

Nana Kofi Donkor, priest for the Asubɔntɛn shrine in Techiman Town is possessed by the deity which has passed through the shrine into the priest's body.

Nana Kofi Owusu at Krobo is possessed by the deity Afra. The white clay smeared on the body is symbolic of goodness and purity.

The author dancing with the priest of Afra, Nana Kofi Owusu, while he is possessed by the deity. Visitors are expected to participate in any rituals attended.

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mately, priests or priestesses for *Onyame*. Likewise, despite slight differences, all of these religious specialists exist to counter the forces of individual and social disorder and deviance, often defined in terms of *abayifoɔ* (female witches) or *abayibronsam* (male witches), *Bronsam* (the devil), and *aduto* (evil medicine).

Despite the importance of the deities in the traditional Bono religion, *Onyame*, the Supreme Being, is the ultimate focal point for every belief and ritual. The name of *Onyame* and His bynames are used constantly every day by every Bono regardless of religious affiliation. In contrast, the names of the deities (*Onyame mma*, children of *Onyame*) are never used in oaths or greetings. The rationale for the need of an intermediate spiritual force linking man to *Onyame* appears in a Bono myth. Variations of this myth are common to other Akan societies, but all stress the initial closeness of *Onyame* to man and the earth.. Later, after having become annoyed by the petty immoralities of man, *Onyame* moved away from man, far into the sky, and then sent His children as messengers and intermediaries between Him and man.

Onyame (Nyame) has several bynames, including *Onyankopɔn*, *Ɔma nsuo* (the provider of rain), and *Ɔma awia* (provider of sunlight). The Supreme Being has no specific shrine other than the *Nyame dua* (a forked tree with a brass pan sitting in its forks) still seen in some Bono compounds and at some shrine houses. Neolithic stone adzes which are found quite frequently in the area are called *Nyame akuma*, axes of *Onyame*; they are supposedly sent to earth in bolts of lightning. When asking someone how he feels, the answer is often "*Nyame n'adom, me ho yɛ*," "By the grace of God, I'm well." Something which is difficult to explain is called "*Nyame asɛm*," "God's matter." For a seemingly insoluble problem, a person will be told, "*Fa ma Nyame*," "Give it to God" (i.e., place the matter before God). When someone takes leave of another after a visit, the guest is told, "*Nyame ne wo nkɔ*," "God go with you." When something good happens, the Bono may say, "*Meda Nyame ase*," "I thank God"; "*Nyame yɛ*," "God is good"; or "*Nyame ne hene*," "God is King." A child born after many previous children have died will be named *Nyamekyɛ* ("gift of God") even if the child is obtained through the intermediate aid of a deity. All lorries and the frames above many doorways have names, proverbs, or phrases written on them. One of the most common is *Nso Nyame yɛ* (meaning "it isn't difficult for God to do"). Another name frequently seen is *Onyamebɛkyerɛ* (which is also a common name for farming villages), which means God will direct or lead a person; more literally it means

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God will provide for a person. A frequently used proverb states that "*Obi nkyerɛ akwadaa Nyame*," "Nobody needs to explain God to a child," since it is the human condition to know God. If someone has received what is regarded as a divine punishment for a crime, it may be said, "*Nyame tuaa ne ka*," "God repaid him." For someone in need, one might say, "*Nyame bɛboa wo*," "God will aid you." Someone may state, "*Medɔ Nyame*" ("I love God") if the veracity of something he has done is challenged. Another common statement is "*Nyame nnae*" ("God doesn't sleep"). Also, "*Nyame ho yɛ hu*" ("God is miraculous—or wonderful") is said if a person barely escapes a disaster.

Many Bono Christians and Muslims refer to the traditional Bono priests and priestesses and their shrines as evil machinations of the Devil. The priests and priestesses are very sensitive about such accusations. They agree that some herbalists *(adunsinfoɔ)* can be wicked and use bad medicine *(aduto)* and even challenge the *abosomfoɔ*, but insist that the *akɔmfoɔ* and *abosomfoɔ* are always after good things, order, and progress. They claim that the deities will kill any *ɔbosomfoɔ* or *ɔkɔmfoɔ* who might attempt anything bad. They also insist that they, as much as any Bono Christian or Muslim, center their beliefs on *Onyame*.

Priest Kofi Apoɔ explained that "*Onyame* is omnipotent and created the herbs; all *abosom* are children of *Onyame* and if the *ɔbosomfoɔ* does his work well, it is due to the will of *Onyame*." He also stated that "All the gods are the true spokesmen for *Onyame*. If these gods were not created by *Onyame* the *abayifoɔ* (witches) would give a lot of trouble to human beings. The priests are forbidden to do wrong, such as adultery, murder, or perversion of justice. They, like the gods, follow all the laws laid down by *Onyame*, hence the priests serve *Onyame*." Another priest Nana Kwabena Donkor, explained that when a priest becomes possessed by a deity he first looks at the sky to acknowledge *Onyame*. Other traditional priests explained that the ancestral spirit, *ɔsaman*, is the *honhom* (a spiritual force) from the dead person, and that the newly deceased go to *Asamando* and meet the ancestors in the presence of *Onyame*.

Because the Bono religious specialists—and the deities they tend—play such an important role in the well-being of Techiman Traditional State and its inhabitants, an inventory of traditional shrines in the state was compiled. Collecting the shrine data was often difficult, as many of the priests were reluctant to volunteer information about their shrines. It was also difficult to gain admission to the shrine rooms, especially to take photographs; yet it was essential to see the actual shrine room. At Tanoso, for example, I

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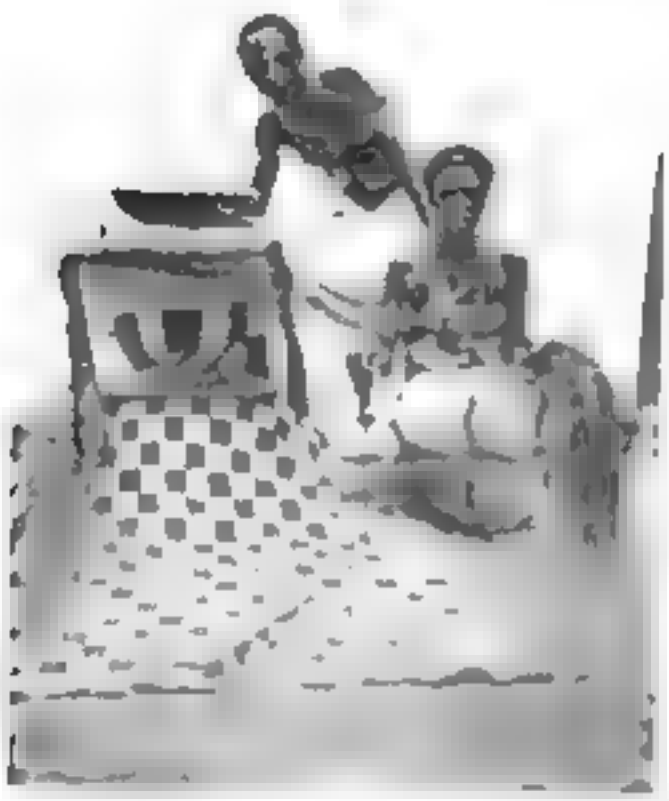
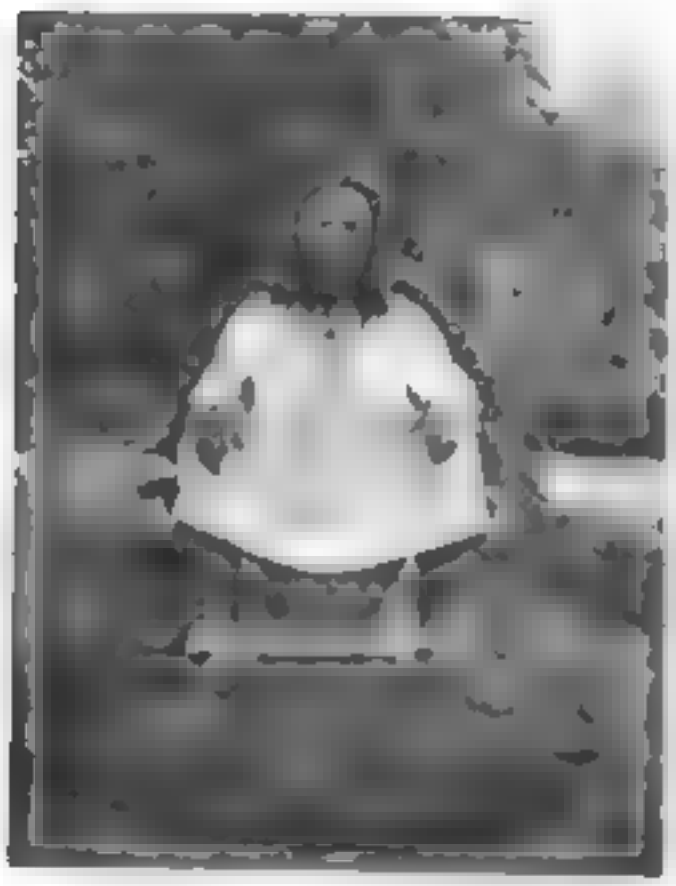
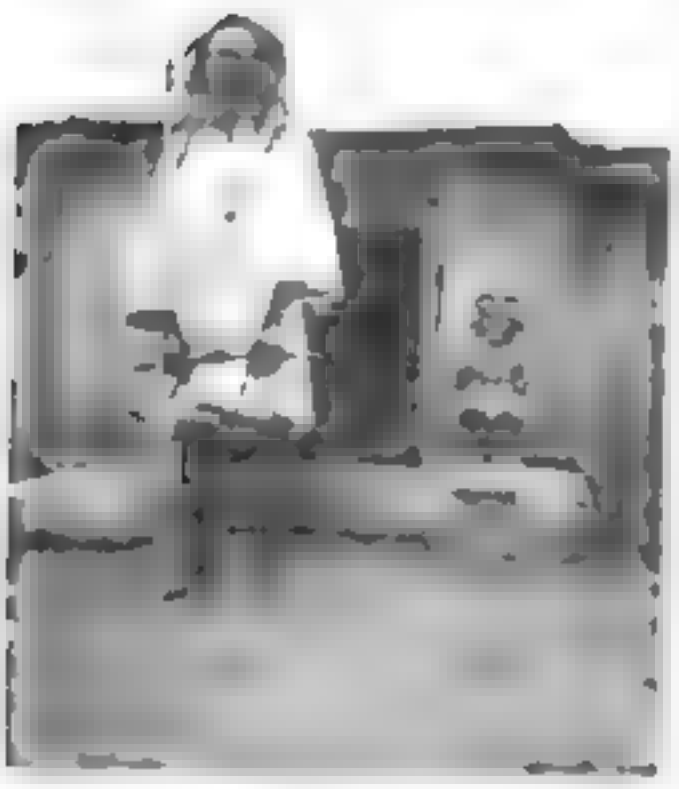


Nana Kofi Owusu with his niece, a priestess, Nana Yaa Ntoa, at Krobo. The brass-pan shrine for Afra is wrapped in expensive cloth and resides on a stool. Note the protective talismans (*asuman*).



Nana Kwaku Badu, priest of the witch-catching deity Kyinaman at Bredi (via Asueyi). Priests of witch-catching deities wear a distinctive hair style.



Nana Kwadwo Fodwo, priest of the witch-catching deity Boɔmuhene at New Jama. Witch-catching shrines are kept in round, conically-roofed shrine houses; these shrine houses frequently contain fine three-dimensional art forms which represent assistants for the deity.

Nana Kwaku Kusi is priest of the witch-catching deity Kofi Yɛnom at Nkwaeso. Note the protective medicines, carvings, and clubs which symbolize the power of the deity.

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collected the history of the deity Atiokosaa in connection with the history of Tanoso town, since the town had grown up around the shrine. However, several months later when I was allowed into the shrine room I found eighteen other shrines besides that of Atiokosaa. Eventually, with the assistance of several prominent priests, it was possible to collect histories from more reluctant priests, visit the shrine room, take photographs, and obtain data on all the shrines seen in the room. Eventually, data on 394 shrines were tabulated.

The major Bono religious forces, according to the shrine histories, are *Onyame*, the *abosom* (deities), and the *asaman* (the ancestors). The earth spirit, *Asase Yaa* (*asase*, earth; *Yaa*, a female born on Thursday), is also important in the Bono religion. The direct hierarchy of spiritual forces in the Bono religion stems from the apex, *Onyame*, followed by His children, the deities, and finally by lesser spirits in the form of talismans *(asuman)* and specific preventive medicines *(dudo)*. These spiritual forces, along with their human custodians, seek to maintain the social norms which center upon the matrilineal descent system. The two primary evil forces to contend with are the *abayifoɔ* (witches), persons who use their evil spiritual power *(bayi)*, often unconsciously, to destroy or harm others related matrilineally, and *aduto* (evil medicine; juju) which can be used by anyone who can acquire it (usually from an herbalist) to harm anyone, both within and outside one's matrilineage.

The most important spiritual forces after *Onyame* are the deities and their potential abodes, the shrines. The two main divisions for the deities include the *Atano*, who (most deities are considered to be male) originated at the source of the Tano (Taa) River at Tanoboase and are housed in brass pans. *Atano* do not catch witches and only one (Botwerewa) can kill social deviants. These *Atano* shrines divide and spread from the original shrine at Tanoboase in a manner following lineage segmentation, which has been extensive in the rapidly expanding population. The *Atano* shrines, then, unite the population at the spiritual level.

The second division is the *abosommerafoɔ* (*abosom*, deities; *ɔbrafoɔ*, executioner) who are usually taken from the forest and housed in leather-covered wooden containers; they specialize in catching witches, in controlling those using *aduto* and, as the name implies, in executing implacable offenders. All *Atano* are sons of *Onyame*; if someone has a Tano god he can also procure an *abosombrafoɔ* (e.g., Tigare) to help the Tano god to catch witches. With the exception of the one Tano *abosombrafoɔ* (Botwerewa), the rest are much more recent in the Bono religion and may be related to culture

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change involving an increased emphasis on individualism. The fact that the priests for the new *abosommerafoɔ* shrines show deference to those of the *Atano* may be a function of the respect given in the Bono social system to the elderly, whose status increases with age.

The *asuman*, unlike the *abosom*, are charms or medicines which can be obtained by voluntary action by any individual. They tend to have more specific functions than the *Atano* or *abosommerafoɔ* shrines; the small *asuman* or personal talismans may have only one function each. Once a *suman* has shown its powers and becomes, in effect, a family heirloom which functions successfully for persons other than the initial owner, it moves into a limbo area between a *suman* and an *ɔbosom* and may be referred to by either term. It assumes more of the functions of the *ɔbosom*, but the fact that it was obtained through an initial voluntary act still negates its being a true *ɔbosom*.

There are also ancestral stool shrines which represent the matrilineages, and forest deities which inhabit monoliths, smaller stones, and caves. Some carvings *(Akua mma)*, medicines *(dudo)*, and personal talismans *(asuman)* are important enough to warrant specific names; there are dozens more with only their generic labels.

B. Festivals

The only state religious affairs which are public are two annual festivals, the *Apoɔ* Festival, which usually occurs in March, and the Yam Festival which falls sometime in October. In addition to these, there is a periodic, minor festival celebrated every forty-second day, a day called Monokuo.

The Techiman *Apoɔ* Festival, an annual eleven-day celebration, originated at Manso, the ancient capital of the Bono Kingdom. This festival allows every person resident in Techiman Traditional State, without regard to class, creed, ethnic group, or race, eleven days of liberty to lampoon, in the form of songs and proverbs, the faults and malpractices of any other person, including those in authority—especially the *Ɔmanhene* and his divisional chiefs. In addition, the people may sing the praises of those in authority in appreciation of worthy achievements so as to encourage them to even greater deeds. During this period it is strictly forbidden to fight in any way. The emphasis of the festival is upon the removal of bitterness and misfortune in the State. After all personal grudges, faults, and hatreds are sung and spoken out amicably, the end result is renewed peace and harmony among the Techiman inhabitants; the spirit *(sunsum)* of the

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state is cleansed after all the unspoken interpersonal bitternesses are voiced.

The festival period is, in fact, a period of coming together in which the people from all over the Techiman traditional area, including well-wishers and invitees from other states, meet in the capital to display the traditional Bono culture through singing, dancing, and drumming.

The *Ɔmanhene* and his elders, through the *Barimhene* purify the soul of King Ameyaw (the chief defeated by the Asante in 1723), adorn his grave with the royal regalia of the incumbent *Ɔmanhene*, recall the deeds that Ameyaw performed for the State *(ɔman)*, and present drinks, sheep, and food to his soul and those of the other ancestral chiefs of the Techiman-Bono State.

Finally, the *Apoɔ* is a period during which the shrines of various gods and goddesses are purified. The shrine of the main deity in Techiman Township, *Taa Kɛse (Taa Mɛnsah)*, is, at this time, purified at the River Agyentoamu during the last hour of the celebration; this serves as a sign of the completion of the *Apoɔ* Festival.

The other major annual Bono Festival is the Yam Festival (*ɔhenerɛkɔdibayerefoforo:* literally, the chief is going to eat new yams). The myth explaining the origin of the festival states that when the Techiman-Bono people came from the cavern at Amowi, *Onyame* pointed out forest yams *(aha bayere)*. Seeing that bush pigs and elephants had eaten some of the yams, they cooked a few and saw that the yam was good food. They gave some to their chief, who also enjoyed it. After that, they began to celebrate on an annual basis the day on which they first found yams. After their chief died, they fed his soul *(ɔsaman)* yams on the same day. Later the Bono began to plant yams, and the yam became the most important staple in the Bono diet. Every farmer celebrates the festival to thank *Onyame* after the harvest. The living and the deceased are all invited to share in the abundance.

Every Bono chief and priest celebrates a yam festival, but before the celebrations begin, a man from the village of Kenten whose title is *Akokohwedeɛ* (woodhen) first tastes the yam. When he sees that the yam is ripe, early in the morning on the traditional day called *Fodwo* he informs the god *Taa Mɛnsah* that the yam is ready to be prepared for *ɛto* (mashed yams mixed with palmoil).

The *Taa Mɛnsah* deity celebrates his yam festival on *Fodwo*, a Monday. The new yam is hung from rafters in the shrine room for some weeks before the *Akokohwedeɛ* comes to taste it. After the yam is hung, children may begin to eat new yam and the elders can

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Clay dwarfs containing protective medicine guard the Boɔmuhene shrine house at New Jama.

The shrines for the witch-catching deities Ntoahene and Kumaduosia at Ayiasu.

Nana Kwaku Boadu dancing possessed by the witch-catching deity Buruma at Bonkwae. Note the female chorus behind him.

The shrine for the fertility deity Aberewa Agyenna being carried by the son of Nana Kwabena Donkor, priest of the witch-catching deity Kumanini at Bonkwae. The son is an apprentice priest.

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begin to eat *aso bayere* (one species of yam). In the evening on *Fodwo*, the god *Taa Mɛnsah* is prepared to eat yam after being carried on the main street from one end of the town to the other end three times and consulted. After this, the god informs the *Ɔmanhene* that he is about to eat yam and the *Ɔmanhene* gives the god permission to eat the yam. The *Ɔmanhene* sends a yam to the god and it is always this yam which is cooked as *ɛto* and placed on the shrine. The next day, Tuesday, the *Ɔmanhene* sends a sheep and wine to the god.

Two weeks after the *Taa Mɛnsah* Yam Festival, the yam festivals for the Queenmother, the *Adontenhene*, and the *Nifahene* are celebrated on a *Monofie*, a Friday. *Nwonakusie*, a Thursday, is the yam festival day for the *Twafohene*, the *Adaatihene*, the *Akyeamehene*, the *Konkontiwahene*, and the *Krontihene*. *Fofie*, another Friday, is the yam festival day for the *Ɔmanhene*, the *Gyaasehene*, the *Ankɔbeahene*, and the *Barimhene*. The *Ɔmanhene* provides about six sheep and a cow for his own yam festival. These are sacrificed, the blood being spilled on the ancestral stools; the meat is cooked and distributed.

Although the Yam and *Apoɔ* festivals are annual, the Bono celebrate the *Monokuo* ceremony every forty-two days, on the Wednesday called *Monokuo*. During the *Monokuo*, early in the morning, the *Ɔmanhene* pours a libation on his ancestral stools. After that, the elders come to join him and they all go to the palace for the *Taa Mɛnsah* shrine to say good morning to him. At the last *Monokuo* for the year, the *Ɔmanhene* pours a libation on the god. Otherwise, they only go to greet the god and then return to their houses. In the afternoon, each of the elders returns to *Taa Mɛnsah*'s palace with schnapps or pots of palmwine. The drinks are used to pour libations for each of the chiefs, after which they drink together, drums are beaten, and they dance.

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